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ABSTRACT

This sourcebook provides background materials and teaching suggestions for Catholic Church educators implementing a media literacy program. The six chapters are: Chapter 1, "Why Media Literacy?," recognizes the Catholic Church's challenge and a call for critical consciousness. Chapter 2, "The Four Principles of Media Literacy," is subdivided into: (1) "Media Construct Reality"; (2) "Media Use Identifiable Techniques"; (3) "Media Are Businesses with Commercial Interests"; and (4) "Media Present Ideologies and Value Messages." Chapter 3, "Christian Discernment in a Mass-Mediated Culture," contains a "Theological Reflection" by James McDonnell. Chapter 4, "How to Introduce Media Literacy in Your Pastoral Setting," contains: (1) "The Pastoral Circle: Making the Values Connection"; (2) "Media Literacy and the Question of Production"; (3) "How to Use Sample Sessions"; (4) "Building Blocks for Curriculum Planning: 'Explore and Connect'"; and (5) "Video Overview and Integration: 'Challenging the Image Culture.'" Chapter 5, "Sample Sessions: Working with Youth," provides the following sample sessions for "You Are What You Watch": (1) Junior High: "In Your Face and Your Pocket: Who's after Your Allowance?"; (2) Senior High: "Get the Scoop: Is it True News?"; and (3) Late Adolescent: "Who Do You Say I Am? Fashion, Ads, and Beauty." Chapter 6, "Sample Sessions: Working with Adults," provides sample sessions for "The Work of Our Hands: Idolatry in the Consumer Culture": (1) Adult Faith Formation: "The New Religion: Advertising"; (2) Peace and Justice: "Rights and Responsibilities in the Media Age"; (3) Family Life/Marriage Preparation: "TV Families: Myths, Make Believe, and Magic"; and (4) Teachers and Leaders: "The Gospel Challenge of Media Literacy." The appendix includes: (1) "Create Your Own Session: Outline Format"; (2) "Ideas for Additional Sessions"; (3) Overhead Master #1: "The Pastoral Circle"; and (4) Overhead Master #2: "The Four Principles of Media Literacy." Sample sessions are included. (EH)

Forming Values in the Media Age

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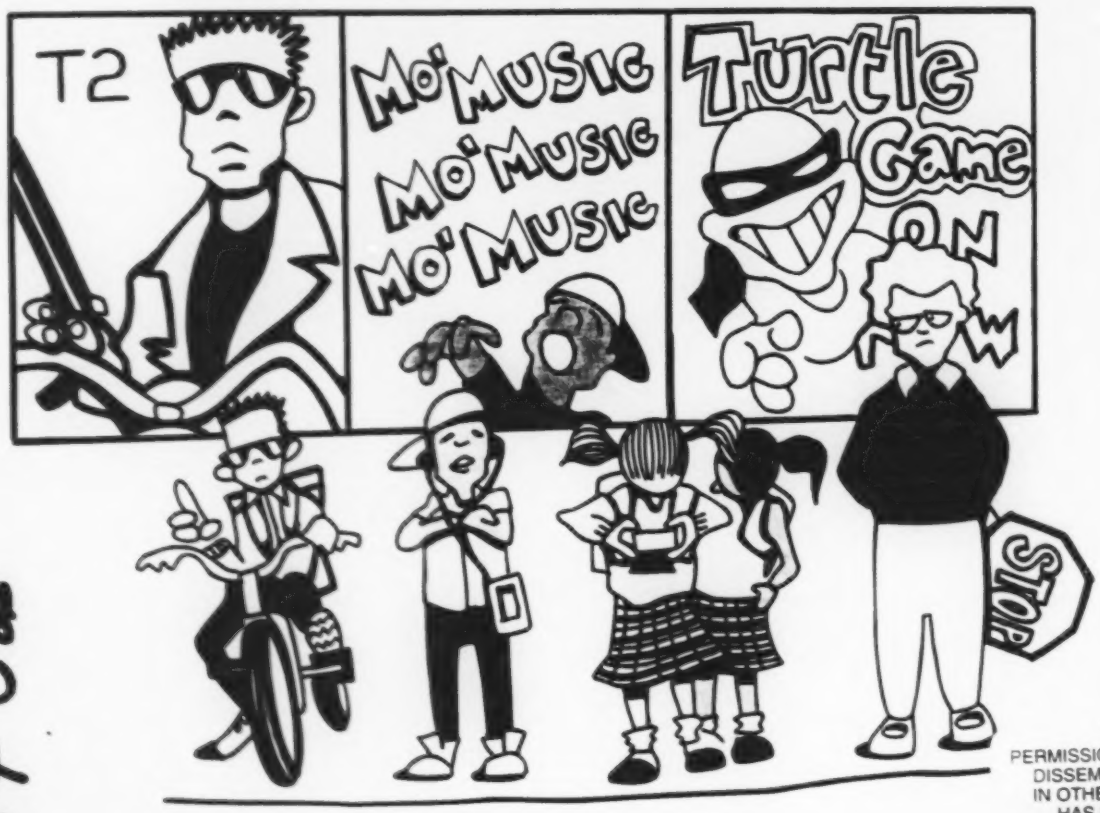

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CENTER FOR MEDIA AND VALUES

NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

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Preface

There's power in the message...the message of the Gospel!

But there is also power in the different messages conveyed by the media. Often, we the viewers, listeners and readers allow the media that surrounds us to dictate powerful messages in ways that detract from the Christian and family values that we so strongly espouse in all the other spheres of our lives.

Catholic Connections to Media Literacy is a special effort of the Catholic Communication Campaign of the U. S. Catholic Conference to recognize the urgent need to develop critical thinking about the influence of media in our time. This project responds to the Vatican call in *Communio et Progressio* (1972) and *Aetatis Novae* (1992) which encourages us to deepen our "understanding of issues relating to communications and media" and to translate that understanding into "practical policies and workable programs."

The Catholic Communication Campaign is committed to supporting and developing projects which bring the values of our Judeo-Christian heritage to the foreground of media in all its expressions. Students and teachers, families and parish leaders need to have the skills necessary to understand how these images and messages impact their daily lives so that they can become a part of positive change where change is needed.

The tools and background for introducing this important field into daily formation of Christian faith and values is provided in ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy***. Learning these critical and analytical skills, teaching them to others and moving beyond them to effect change personally, locally, nationally and globally is now up to each and every one of us.

Ramón E. Rodríguez
National Director
The Catholic Communication Campaign
August, 1992

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Forming Values in the Media Age

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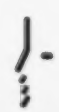

CENTER FOR MEDIA AND VALUES
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Introduction

Forming Values in the Media Age is a key component of ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy***—a pioneering multimedia learning program linking Catholic values and today's media culture. This hallmark project of The Catholic Communication Campaign of the United States Catholic Conference is your invitation to a deepened awareness of the impact of media in our contemporary cultural environment. It is a tribute to the vision of the Campaign's Communication Committee who sensed this urgent need of Catholic families today and funded its development.

Because of our commitment to values in media and our experience in producing *Media&Values* magazine and its companion Media Literacy Workshop Kits™, the Center for Media and Values welcomes the opportunity to collaborate in this pioneering effort in the field of media literacy education. We call your attention to the other materials that accompany this booklet: *Media&Values* Issue #57: *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age* and its Workshop Kit: *Living in the Image Culture* which provide the cornerstone concepts around which this Sourcebook and the whole ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy*** program is built.

We are grateful to all who cooperated to bring this project to reality over nearly 18 months:

- **Regina Haney, OSF,** provided our invaluable liaison with the National Catholic Educational Association, particularly the professional section on Supervision / Personnel / Curriculum.
- An Editorial Board, meeting over several long week-ends and numerous conference calls, provided a spectrum of educational practitioners to assure that realistic and practical materials would be developed:
    - **MaryBeth Mueller**
      Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Diocese of Phoenix, AZ.
    - **Jack Armstrong**
      Coordinator/Youth Ministry and Adult Education, St. Jude Community, Dewitt, MI.
    - **Maruja Sedano**
      Associate Director/Office of Religious Education, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, CA.
    - **Mira Mosle, BVM**
      Director of Marketing, Iowa Religious Media Services, Des Moines, IA.
- **John Pungente, SJ** director of the Jesuit Communications Project in Toronto and one of the world's leading experts in the field of media literacy, served as our mentor in this endeavor. We are grateful for his expertise, his wisdom and his gracious sharing of resources and contacts.
- **Kevin O' Brien,** Director of communications for the Diocese of Sacramento, California, crafted this amazing sourcebook from his wide experience and creativity as a religious educator, youth minister and media producer.
- **Frances Wessel, SSND,** Brought her valuable network of knowledge and experience to the effort as project consultant.
- **Golden Dome Productions** of South Bend, IN (Chuck Huffman, producer; Chris Salvador, director) creatively developed the video component, *Challenging the Image Culture*, to complement and expand the print materials.

Finally, Center staff members **Rosalind Silver**, editor, **Kerry Gerot**, art director/production manager, **Beth White**, resources coordinator and **David Ruth**, editorial assistant, along with **Patti Benner,** art designer and **John Santos**, illustrator, contributed invaluably to the total effort of ***Catholic Connnections to Media Literacy.***

Elizabeth Thoman, CHM
Executive Director
Center for Media and Values
August, 1992

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1 Why Media Literacy?

We live in the information age. It's said often, but what does it mean? Let's examine it. The amount of information in the world doubles every five years.[1] Imagine, every five years the world's information *doubles*.

But there's more to the information explosion than that. Consider this: there is more information in the daily edition of *The New York Times* than an individual man or woman in the 16th Century had to process in their whole lives. More information in a daily newspaper than in a lifetime! And that doesn't include all the information we have to process from other sources: television, film, computers, phone, fax, magazines and billboards. Explosion is an understatement.

At the same time, one-fifth of the adult population in the U.S. is functionally illiterate.[2] Just because there is more information doesn't mean there is more knowledge. In fact, the information age leaves many of us numb. We are incapacitated by the sheer volume of material we need to keep abreast of and often lack the skills to "read" the images. We can't see the knowledge for the information.

The "mediated" world we live in, and the one our children are growing in, poses significant challenges. As Catholic religious educators, ministers and teachers we need to rise to this challenge in creative ways. We need to process the publications, translate the television, make sense of the music videos. We need a decoder for the data. Media literacy is that decoder

Media literacy provides the tools not just for critical awareness, but for critical autonomy.

The National Catechetical Directory illustrates the call for media literacy this way:

All who use the communications media in their work have a duty in conscience to make themselves competent in the art of social communication, and this applies in particular to people with educational responsibilities, including catechists. Catechists should learn how to take media into account as a crucial part of the cultural background and experience of those being catechized; how to use media in catechesis; and how to help their students understand and evaluate media in light of religious values.[3]

Over the last decade, countries like Canada, Scotland, England and Australia have developed and refined constructive ways to teach media literacy. Some, like the Ontario Ministry of Education, have made media literacy a mandatory part of the English curriculum for grades seven through 12. It becomes evident that as we move toward an increasingly electronic and image-based culture, we must provide tools to help people understand the media, its messages and its effects.

Goal: Values Education

The concept of media literacy is not a means to inoculate against the influence of culture, but a way to assist in the development of "critical awareness." It strives to move the recipient from passive consumption of media to discriminating interaction with media, empowering people to resist destructive elements and celebrate positive ones. In the past, there has been a tendency to "blame" the media, an "us against them" approach. Education about the media often focused only on questions of whether material was "good" or "bad." In the '80s, media educators shifted their approach, widening the lens, to examine the broader context of the media: their political, social, and economic impact.

What, for example, are the political implications of reporters going to a morning press briefing in the White House to find out what went on in the world in the last 24 hours? What are the economic implications of the shift in the focus of tobacco advertising from men to women in the early '80s, and to youth and the developing world in the '90s? What are the social implications of gender roles as portrayed through soap operas or rock videos?

Media literacy stresses our responsibility to participate in the process of studying those questions. The principles of media literacy act as a coherent umbrella for examining diverse mediums and divergent issues presented in this information age. The principles of media literacy, combined with the reflection model provided by the Pastoral Circle, which we use in the *sample sessions*, form a potent foundation for consciousness raising. Media literacy provides the tools then, not just for critical awareness, but for critical autonomy.

Media literacy isn't something you "learn" in one sitting, it's a consciousness that develops over time. We hope to provide some examples to get you started, and to spur your creativity to adapt and augment this material.

We need to process the publications, translate the television, make sense of the music videos. We need a decoder for the data. Media literacy is that decoder.

Notes

Bill Moyers, *World of Ideas*, interview with Vartan Gregorian, (Doubleday, 1989), p. 182.

Jonathan Kozol, *Illiterate America*, (NAL/Dutton, 1986), puts the figure as high as one third.

National Catechetical Directory of the United States, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, (United States Catholic Conference, 1979), p. 157, No. 261.

The document *Aetatis Novae*, Pastoral Instruction in Social Communication, was released by the Pontifical Council for Social Communication on the 20th anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*, March 17 1992. (For the complete text of the document see *Origins*, NC Documentary Service, March 26, 1992), Vol. 21, No. 42.

The Church's Challenge: Critical Consciousness

Mass media's challenge to educators and people of faith is not a new one. The Catholic Church has spoken about the power of media since the invention of the motion picture. The Church's concern has always been a call for a critical consciousness, an understanding of the media's role and place in modern culture and creative collaboration between the faithful and the media. It was outlined in the following way in the 1971 document *Communio et Progressio*:

The Church considers it to be one of her most important tasks to provide the means for educating recipients of the media in Christian principles. Catholic schools and organizations cannot ignore the urgent duty they have in this field. It is never too early to start encouraging children in artistic taste, a keen critical faculty and a sense of personal responsibility based on sound morality. This sort of training must be given regular place in school curricula. It must be given, and systematically, at every stage of education.

In 1972 the American Catholic Bishops addressed the influence of technology on faith in their document, *To Teach As Jesus Did*:

Underlying virtually all of the changes occurring in the world today, both as instrument and cause, are technology and the technological worldview. Technology is one of the most marvelous expressions of the human spirit in history; but it is not an unmixed blessing. It can enrich life immeasurably or make a tragedy of life. The choice is man's, (sic) and education has a powerful role in shaping that choice.

Recently in the document *Aetatis Novae*, the Church renewed its call for catechists, religious leaders, teachers and youth ministers to address the way media affect the faithful:

...much that men and women know and think about life is conditioned by the media; to a considerable extent, human experience itself is an experience of media. ... as the church takes a positive, sympathetic approach to media, seeking to enter into the culture created by modern communications in order to evangelize effectively, it is necessary at the very same time that the church offer a critical evaluation of mass media and their impact upon culture.

2 The Four Principles of Media Literacy

Like fish in water, we often fail to notice the flood of images that washes over us daily. But that does not mean that our relationship with what we see and hear is passive.

In actuality, we are very active as we watch, read or listen, and the meaning of the media we experience is strongly influenced by what we bring to them. Media literacy specialists express this relationship by saying that audiences "negotiate meaning." That is, who we are, our sex, ethnic background, age, character and personal history determine media's meaning to us. Or, to put it another way, *we help create media as we experience them.*

This two-way relationship turns the tables on the common assumption that media merely entertain us or provide information. We all participate actively in the media "wrestling match." Like Jacob in his contest with the angel, each of us must strive for the blessing that results from the struggle.

For those not trained in media literacy the contest is unconscious, and therefore unequal. But education in media literacy principles can help inhabitants of the media culture participate as active respondents to media messages.

Thus we can filter and change what media present to us by the way we react to their messages. We can question, challenge and contradict—or support and reinforce—what we see and hear.

"The average 10-year-old can name more brands of beer than presidents."

George Gerbner

Although the interaction is a complex one, theorists have developed a simplified way of thinking about it. The four principles of media literacy outlined below can provide a framework for critical analysis and value clarification activities. Once you understand them, your relationship with media will never be the same again.

1. Media Construct Reality

The images we experience: the luscious-looking ice cream in ads, the explosions in the movies, the "latest" news before bedtime, are constructed. They are put together in photo studios, on location, in editing suites. They are "made up," in more ways than one. Take the ice cream. It's most likely mashed potatoes, shortening and food coloring—yum! After all, "real" ice cream would melt under those hot studio lights. And that explosion, it was detonated with explosives by

"The fact is incontrovertible: People today live 'by the media' whereas once they lived 'by the book.'"

William Kuhns, *The Electronic Gospel*

experts under controlled conditions. Even the news is selectively photographed and edited.

The point is: all media are constructed and what is constructed seems like reality for us. The pictures, images and ideas ask us to "buy into," the reality made up by the writers, photographers, artists and editors. *The Cosby Show* is not a real family, it's a made up one. But without critical skills one could understand the *representation* as the *reality*. It's easier to understand when the family is fabricated in an obvious fashion, like the cartoon family *The Simpsons*, but the line blurs when the family, or characters, seem real.

This semblance of reality is an important factor. How do youth discern between reality and the media version of reality? How can we help young people decipher media's messages? A principal method entails *stopping the medium.* Stop it long enough to examine it, to deconstruct it, to take it apart. Examination will heighten our ability to tell the difference between what's "real" and what's "made up."

The document on Social Communication asks us to begin this process in earnest:

This sort of training must be given a regular place in school curricula. It must be given, and systematically, at every stage of education. In this way, young people can be helped gradually to develop a new perception in their interpretation of what is offered them by the press, the other media and the literary publishing houses.[1]

We are all aware of the impact of the image culture on the young, but this issue—what media offers as "real"—is not limited to youth. In fact, as the document goes on to point out, youth may be better equipped to deal with the media than many adults because "these have been born and have grown up in a different kind of society. Because of this they are better forewarned and better forearmed to meet the pressures that come from every side."

Adults need to develop their abilities to recognize media constructions of reality. Sometimes that is difficult. The events in the film *JFK* by Oliver Stone illustrate this difficulty. The film depicts a fictional account of the events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. The film weaves "real" footage together with actors playing roles of "real" people to create an atmosphere of a documentary style, a style which implies a certain journalistic objectivity. Charges have been levelled against Stone's approach, suggesting his fictional account confuses by appearing to be "real."

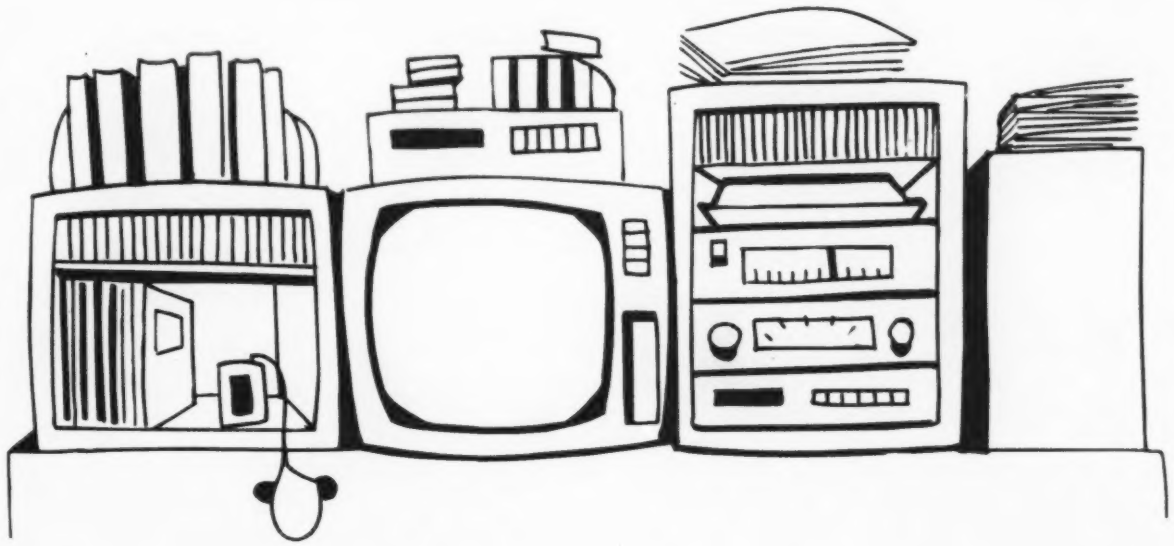
Or consider the "reality" of *Murphy Brown* as portrayed by actress Candice Bergen. Bergen plays the part of an anchor of a fictional investigative news program. At the start of the 1991 fall season the show topped the ratings when the *Brown* character faced an unexpected pregnancy. That pregnancy announcement followed some real-life pregnancies among real network newswomen. But *Brown* blurred the distinction further by including real-life newspeople on the show. For example, news reporter Connie Chung warned Bergen's character in one episode to avoid risking her credibility by appearing as herself in, guess what, a television sitcom.[2] (That is: a real life newsperson explains to a fictional newsperson that she should not appear on a television program that exists only within a fictional television program.)

In another episode, Bergen's character was called before a special investigative committee regarding the source of a story. This show aired the same day that National Public Radio's Nina Totenberg appeared before a real congressional committee investigating her sources for the information regarding Anita Hill's accusations of sexual harassment by then-Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas.

We must begin to stop the media to ask pertinent questions about the version of reality portrayed. The first principle of media literacy, *media construct reality*, encourages us to begin examining *how* media constructions influence our values.

2. Media Use Identifiable Techniques

Here's the news. A middle-aged, distinguished, affable white man is calmly introducing short segments of video:



1. Something exploding.
2. Something catastrophic.
3. Something with emotional impact.
4. Something political.

In between these parts he reassures us with his smile and familiarity that this is normal, that he'll be here each evening to lend consistency to these turbulent and troubling images. He acts, literally, as an anchor in a tumultuous world. He consoles, smiles and the commercial begins. That technique, when more closely examined, becomes almost transparent to the recipient.

The case of news is a good example. The format is followed by virtually every television newsroom in the country. The first series of images will be a promotion of the news department itself, showing its staff members busy about the important business of gathering information for the viewer. The fast, dramatic music and constantly moving shots herald important things to follow. Next, we see video clips of the top stories followed by a commercial break. Then an anchor introduces more detailed scenes and reports about the headlines shown at the beginning of the broadcast. The anchor is cleancut, clear, makes no mistakes and directs us on our tour of local and world events.

There are some obvious techniques: lighting to highlight a certain part of the scene, camera angles such as looking up to lend authority, zooming in to add impact, music and sound effects to provide emotional clues to the action, placement of products and people.

"A public well-educated in the nuances and methods of the visual media will both demand better quality and be less readily manipulated by them."

Robert Kubey, PhD

Each medium has its own production codes. In television you'll see techniques like video effects: cuts, dissolves, wipes, camera angles and music. Magazine ads have techniques like use of colors, placement of copy, sidebar boxes and title treatments. Even newspapers have techniques: banner headlines, use of photos, placement of ads and separate sections for sports or business or family features.

These production codes often slip by without notice, even when we know they are there. For example, have you ever seen a movie that depicts a movie being made? We may see the camera revealed, the production crew, the director giving instructions—we get a glimpse of the secrets behind the scene on the screen. When that technique is not used we tend to forget the camera really exists, forget there is a whole set of techniques used that make us feel angry, sad, excited, scared. Try to remember the last scary scene you saw in a film or TV program. Do you also recall the music? The next time you see a scary scene on TV or in a video, turn off the music. Without it the scene often appears silly rather than scary.

Examination of the production codes of the media help us understand the way those techniques manipulate our emotions but we must not assume that just teaching media techniques means we are teaching media literacy. Effective media literacy education involves further analysis flowing from the next two principles.

"The Watergate scandals became 'real,' not when the* Washington Post *reported the stories, but when television reported that the* Washington Post *reported the stories."

Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*

3. Media are Businesses with Commercial Interests

Why would anyone want to influence our emotions and imaginations? The answer to that question can be found in the next principle of media literacy: *Media are businesses with commercial interests.* To say that media have commercial interests might seem obvious. But the extent to which those interests dominate demands attention. *All* media have commercial interests. Those interests shape the very nature of the medium. To gain insight to the extent of the receivers' role as expected consumer, it may be interesting to read the pages of *Advertising Age* or *Broadcasting* and see yourself mentioned in purely demographic language. Note this ad for the Arts & Entertainment network that appeared in various television trade magazines:

Headline: In a time when clients spend less, why not buy an audience that spends more?
Copy: With the increasing importance on reaching affluent consumers with buying power, now more than ever, A&E is one of the smartest buys in television. A&E's quality programming delivers recession-proof, upscale viewers, making media buys effective and efficient..."

In 1991 corporations spent $130 billion on advertising,

the equivalent of $6 per week for every man, woman and child in the U.S.[3] The media we think of as "free" are also susceptible to market forces and money. Even in "public" radio, for example, a "corporate contribution" of $250,000 will ensure two mentions of the corporate name on National Public Radio six days a week for a year.[4]

How do these commercial interests affect freedom of the press? The press is increasingly pressured by the economic muscle of advertisers touting tobacco, alcohol, fashion, cosmetics, automobiles and real estate. The press is often pressured to succumb to *advertisers'* commercial interests, pressured into a form of economic censorship that undermines the notion of press freedom as outlined in the Constitution.

Here are some examples. *Time* magazine carried a special advertising section on health in the October 1985 issue. All references to the hazards of smoking in the section, which was supplied by the American Academy of Family Physicians, were omitted. The same issue carried seven full-page tobacco ads. A February 1988 issue of *Newsweek* carried a cover story about heart attacks. The ad on the back cover was for Malibu cigarettes and the article failed to mention smoking as a major contributing factor to heart disease.[5]

How do these subtle censorial activities affect editorial or journalistic freedom? The connection is fairly obvious. In examining the tobacco industry, the impact is insidiously elusive when no direct links can be found. Nabisco Brands and Del Monte Foods are subsidiaries of tobacco giant R.J. Reynolds. Kraft General Foods is a subsidiary of Philip Morris. The Philip Morris tobacco company controlled the largest advertising budget of any American company in 1987, an estimated $1 billion per year.[6] Tobacco advertising is prohibited at *Reader's Digest*, yet in 1986 its editors turned down an advertising supplement on heart disease proposed by the American Heart Association. The reason: the ad department felt it would not be able to sell ads to food companies *owned* by cigarette companies.[7]

The same philosophy is expressed more bluntly by an ABC executive: "The network is paying affiliates to carry network commercials, not programs. What we are is a distribution system for Proctor & Gamble."[8]

Often these commercials are concerned with presenting images which, as media scholar and author Sut Jhally in his interview in *Media&Values* magazine #57, *Impact of Images*, supersede or replace religious meaning—in fact, become "religious" in their mythic power of imbuing products with meaning.

Jhally's arguments, although not religious in content themselves, echo Moses' warning to the Israelites against idolatry. On his return from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, Moses found his community worshipping a golden calf. Is advertising our golden calf? Is it an example of our image culture idolatry?

The book of Genesis illustrates how humanity was created in God's image. The Gospels consistently illustrate how Christ dealt with the marginalized over the models, the broken over the "beautiful," the exiled over the elite. Pope John Paul II amplifies Christ's actions with these words to the media:

How do the weakest and the most defenseless in society appear in your words and images: the most severely handicapped, the very old, foreigners and the undocumented, the unattractive and the lonely, the sick and the infirm? Whom do you depict as having—or not having—human worth? [9]

Pope John Paul II's challenge calls for close inspection of ways that the poor, unheard and outcast are treated in the media. The related responsibility is our ardent action for representation of those groups in healthy, nurturing, life-affirming ways.

4. Media Present Ideologies and Value Messages

It is not merely the ideologies of consumerism or the dominant culture that are tacitly transfused by the image culture. The political will of a system can also be subtly imposed upon through the media. Think of the number of U.S. commercials after the Gulf War that featured the flag or other symbols of America. Did these symbols represent nationalism or consumerism? Were they used purely to get you to feel "American" by buying? How did they elicit "patriotism?"

The questions of ideologies are relatively clear when it comes to examining values presented in pop songs that objectify women or the saturation of kids' cartoons with commercials. But when the values are societal or political, the task is more complex and the question of ideologies becomes occluded if we fail, in the words of theologian Michael Warren, to "pay attention."[10]

What does the notion of freedom mean? How are values like freedom of speech and justice affected by the information age? What are the implications and threats to freedom? Who decides who can have access, and to what? Should all the available information in the world, the stuff that doubles every five years, be readily accessible to everyone for free? Should there be a charge? Should certain groups or individuals be denied access because of their political or social views or standing? Should "private" information about individuals be accessible via computer data banks? Is a Bill of Rights needed for the image culture?

An example: In November 1991 the police department in Cincinnati made all Cincinnati Bell telephone records from

the 513 area code available to Proctor & Gamble.[11] Proctor & Gamble was looking for the source of a story dealing with their troubled food and beverage division by *Wall Street Journal* reporter Alecia Swassy. Proctor & Gamble searched through phone records of 655,297 homes and businesses over a three-month period, looking for calls to Ms. Swassy.

When one realizes that *what* the media covers is influenced by *how much* the sponsors make one must ask questions about the *truth* of the information. That process demands critical scrutiny when exploring questions of justice. How does the triangular, symbiotic relationship between industry, the military and the media affect news coverage about controversial issues?

"When traditional institutions and high art do not provide meaningful public symbols, television images rush in to fill the void."

Gregor T. Goethals

If, as the ABC executive suggested, local affiliates are the network's outlets for Proctor & Gamble products, one can see how a government might consider network news shows the outlet for certain political agendas. NBC is owned by General Electric. GE is a major manufacturer of nearly every major weapon system used in the Gulf War. When correspondents and paid consultants on NBC praised the performance of U.S. weapons, they were extolling equipment, some of which was made by GE, the corporation that pays their salaries.[12]

What if an NBC executive were to say, "the local news affiliates are paid to carry government ideologies, not information; what we are is a vindication system for GE weapons usage." We would be shocked. Consider then, this fact: on the day the Gulf war ended, the executive producer of *Nightline* resigned to take up a new position—as a public affairs assistant to the President.[13]

What, then, are the obligations with regard to authentic, truthful utilization of the electronic media? Pope John Paul II addressed the issue this way in his challenging audience with communications leaders during his visit to Los Angeles in 1987:

...the Church recognizes the need for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, just as does your Constitution. But she goes further. Rights imply corresponding duties. The proper exercise of the right to information demands that the content of what is communicated be true and—within the limits set by justice and charity—complete. Included here is the obligation to avoid any manipulation of the truth for any reason. This manipulation, in fact, takes place when certain issues are deliberately passed over in silence in order that others may be unduly emphasized. It also occurs when information is altered or withheld so that society will be less able to resist the imposition of a given ideology.

Pope John Paul II is outlining the Church's call for justice, challenging us to stand up in the face of the power of the image culture. Warren suggests that standpoint will be a way through the image culture:

...even these strategies may prove useless without a connection to a faith community that has staked its life on an alternative version to life, decisively different from that offered in popular media. The most radical strategy, then, would be the standpoint offered by such a community....A standpoint is not a static position but an engaged one....The most successful strategy open to catechesis is to be actively involved in the production of the alternate religious vision, that is, the alternate culture. Stances of commitment to nonviolence and of solidarity with victims...hold special power to question and counter much imagery in "popular" culture. To name such radical standpoints as the solution is actually to attend to the scope of the problem.[14]

By exploring media literacy exercises and activities within Catholic pastoral, catechetical and educational settings we will begin that process of taking a stand.

Notes

1. *Communio et Progressio*, (The Liturgical Press, January 29, 1971), paragraph 69.
2. Neal Koch, "Everyone has Advice for Murphy, Especially Real-Life Journalists," *New York Times* Arts & Leisure Section, (September 29, 1991).
3. *Wall Street Journal*, cited in "Commercial Break," *Utne Reader*, January/February 1992, p. 55.
4. "Commercial Break," *Utne Reader*, January/February 1992, p. 57.
5. Ronald K. L. Collins, *Dictating Content: How Advertising Pressure Can Corrupt a Free Press*, (Center for the Study of Commercialism, 1992), p. 17.
6. Larry C. White, *Merchants of Death*, (Beech Tree Books, William Morrow and Company, 1988), p. 120.
7. See Above, p. 209.
8. See Note 5, p. 13.
9. John Paul II, *Address to Communication Leaders*, Los Angeles, (Origins, NC Documentary Service, October 19, 1987), Vol. 17, section 5, p. 299.
10. See Warren's article in *Media&Values* #57, *Impact of Images*, "Storytellers Shape Spiritual Values," p. 19.
11. "P&G Search for News Leak Led to Sweep of Phone System Wider Than Thought," James S. Hirsch, *Wall Street Journal*, (August 15, 1991), p. A3
12. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media*, (Lyle Stuart Book-Carol Publishing Group, 1991), preface to the paperback edition, p. xviii.
13. See Above, p. xxi.
14. Michael Warren, *Faith, Culture and the Worshipping Community*, (Paulist Press, 1989), p. 187.

3 Christian Discernment in a Mass-Mediated Culture

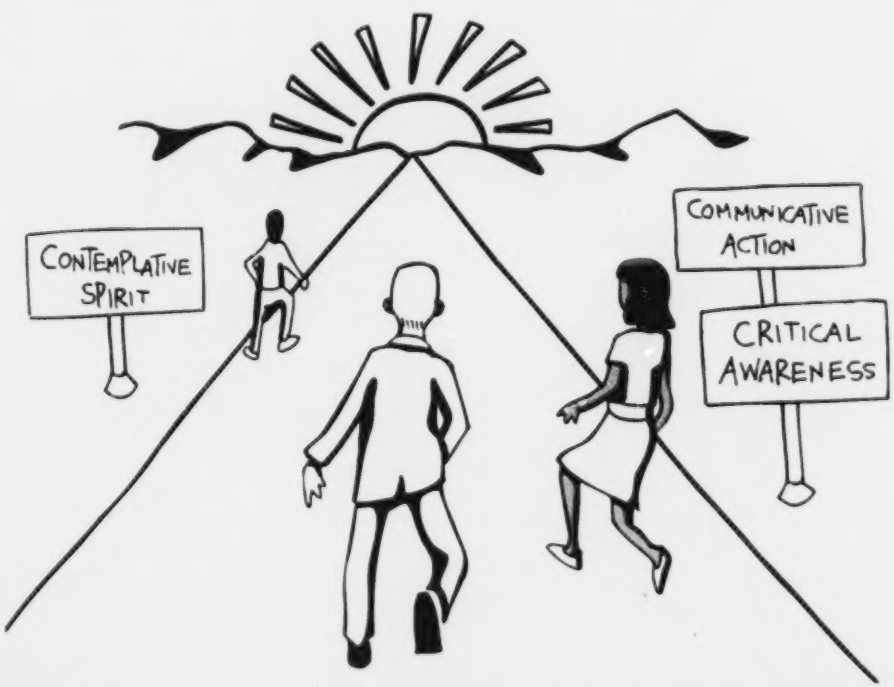
By James McDonnell

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: "You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn to me to heal them." But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear. (Matthew 13:14-16)

As Christians we are called to recognize and celebrate the presence and saving power of Christ and his Spirit in our lives and in the lives of others. That call means that we have to scrutinize not only our individual lives but also our collective life as members of local, national and global cultures. The meanings, attitudes and values, symbols and myths which form the public background to our private lives have to be identified, examined and judged. If they are found wanting we should be prepared to challenge them and, as far as possible, change them. Today that means scrutinizing, challenging and trying to change public culture that is expressed and mediated by the mass communication media.

Christian discernment means looking at and listening to our mass-media culture with the eyes and ears of Christ. We are asked to see truly and hear clearly the sights and sounds of the media so that we may know what values and meanings are informing our culture; but it is difficult to see and hear in a world filled with noise, noise that we take for granted. We tend to become conscious of the media only occasionally.

Once in a while the content of a film or television program assaults our sensibilities or moral sense; stylized aggression in a children's cartoon makes us fearful that children may imitate and act out what they see on screen. Sometimes the media make us angry when they bring the news of human stupidity, or they frighten us with the news of human or natural disaster, and sometimes they stir us to compassion by the report of human misery. On rare occasions we may think about what kind of comedy makes us laugh or what makes a drama gripping. Yet more rarely we may see a film or listen to music that awakens us to feelings of awe and wonderment.



For the most part, however, the media are simply there, providing an unremitting stream of news and views, images and sounds, information and entertainment. The media are, for most of the time, nearly invisible to us; technologies of which we are most aware when they are absent, when the television breaks down or the newspaper fails to appear.

The Media Are the "Massage"

We are creatures of habit and our uses of the media are mostly habitual, unreflecting and routine. From the time the alarm clock and the radio announce that the day has begun until we fall asleep in front of the television screen at night, our senses are bombarded by media images and sounds. Throughout the day, at home, office or factory, in the car or on the train, we turn to radio, newspaper, magazine, television, paperback or stereo "walkman" to pass the time, provide topics of conversation or keep us "up-to-date." At night, television provides the essential accompaniment to our family or community life as we plan our evening around the program schedules.

Marshall McLuhan referred to this state of affairs when he coined the phrases "the medium is the message" and "the medium is the *massage*." McLuhan was pointing out that the influence of a mass medium like television may lie more in its ability to convey the same message instantaneously in sound and vision to millions of people at the same time than in the particular messages conveyed by specific programs. We may criticize this or that television program for its content, but we never question the fact that we spend so much of our leisure time with the television or that we use the radio simply for background music. As McLuhan intimates, we have allowed the media to "massage" us into an unreflective and undiscriminating cultural consumption.

Following Christ in a media culture demands that we become aware of how we use the media and how much we depend on the media to shape the routine of our lives.

Following Christ in a media culture demands that we become aware of how we use the media and how much we depend upon the media to shape the routine of our lives. It also demands that we should examine critically the "messages" purveyed by the media. This *critical awareness* has in turn to be complemented by *communicative action*;[1] and both awareness and action have to be informed by a *contemplative spirit*. Communicative action is a way of communicating that implicitly challenges the one-way flow of information which is the mass media. Communicative action tries to live out the idea that authentic communication is a *sharing* of meaning and values. Finally, the contemplative spirit ensures that both awareness and action are placed at the service of Christ and his purposes.

Escaping the Media "Massage"

Critical awareness has to begin not with the content of the mass media, but with the presence of the media in daily life. Unless we are prepared to liberate ourselves from the compulsion to view, listen or read simply to "pass the time," critical awareness will be no more than a commentary on our own dependence. We have to choose times when we switch off the radio, ignore the television and put the paper aside. Discernment, like prayer, requires a measure of silence and solitude in our life. All of us need to find "peace and quiet" amid the endless routines of daily life. Disengaging every now and then from the noise of the media provides precious moments in which to listen to God and to examine how far we are creative and free in our media use.

For the most part, the media are simply there: providing an unremitting stream of news and views, images and sounds, information and entertainment.

We might begin our examination by reflecting upon our daily routine and habitual actions. Why is it that we switch on the radio in the morning or the television at night? Is it because we wish to listen to or watch some particular program, or is it to fill up the silence? Do we use the newspaper and the television as devices for the avoidance of conversation with those with whom we live? Why do we buy the same newspaper every day? Is it for information or for entertainment?

The questions could be multiplied, but the point is clear. Our habitual media uses are part of the whole fabric of our lives and a true critical awarenss will not affect our media use alone. Choosing not to turn on the radio and television unless we have decided to do so for a specific purpose will leave us with time to spend in other ways. We will have other choices to make. Turning away from the media towards our friends and family may strengthen the bonds of love but may also confront us with personal conflicts hitherto unexpressed. Broadening our reading habits may enrich our understanding but, by the same token, may disturb and question our deepest values.

Examining Media Content

Having examined our own habitual uses of the media, we

need also to consider the content of the programs we watch, the newspapers we read and the songs we sing. Among other things, a culture is a shared view of the world and a collaboration in the establishment of shared meanings and values. We make sense of the world in terms of our culture and we find a mutuality of understanding in our acceptance and use of common symbols and myths. Every day writers, musicians, producers, journalists and other media professionals make and remake songs, stories, dramas and news items that selectively embody and frame the myths, issues, conflicts and ideals of our culture. Most of us accept this selective interpretation of reality without much questioning, since the mass media tend to reinforce and reflect our culture's dominant social, political and cultural assumptions.

Critical analysis is useful and necessary, but inadequate if it only develops skepticism in viewers, listeners and readers.

Once we become aware of how much our perception of the world is filtered through the media screen we can begin to entertain alternative ways of seeing. Once we discard the illusion that the mass media offer us an objective, transparent view of reality, we can begin to have confidence in our own perceptions and judgments. Christians are called to be "in" but not "of" the world (Cf., *John* 17:14-18); today the world is more and more a media world, and we have to be able to stand apart from it in order to ask how consonant are its values and actions with the gospel.

There are numerous questions to ask irrespective of what the particular media arrangements are in our culture. Questions about the ideological or political bias of news and documentaries; questions about the media portrayal of social, cultural and racial groups, questions about the values and attitudes presented through popular dramas, films and comedy shows, questions about the control and organization of broadcasting or the press and questions about the possibilities for minority points of view to be expressed. Such questions are by no means exhaustive, but they illustrate the complexity of the informational and entertainment culture we take for granted.

Appreciation As Well As Criticism

Critical analysis is useful and necessary, but inadequate if it only develops skepticism in viewers, listeners and readers. Even skeptics need to recognize that enjoyment, enlightenment, insight and delight may come to us through the media. The eyes of millions were opened to the reality of African hunger by the television news reports from Ethiopia. Films and plays, even the soap opera, have provided millions of people with hours of simple pleasure. Educational and documentary television programs have shown countless people the wonders of the world about them. Though "objectivity" may be elusive, news reports reveal scandals and problems that need to be corrected and punished. Comedies give people the opportunity to laugh and relax, and millions have shared the dramatic excitements of great sporting events. Many young people find in rock music, for all its commercialism, an authentic expression of their own felt hopes, desires and anxieties.

Critical awareness should be also critical appreciation. Once we have become aware that media content needs critical scrutiny we can begin to look out for that content which enriches our lives and culture. That does not mean that we should look only for the "serious" and so-called "quality" content. Mass popular culture need not be judged by the same standards applied to traditional "high" culture, and critical appreciation should not be a code for cultural snobbery. The essential point is that we should choose rather than accept passively the content we receive. We should become active and discriminating users who are conscious of how the media are integrated into our lives.

Appreciation should be communicated. How many of us, so quick to condemn a sexually explicit or violent television program, have ever written to a broadcasting organization to praise an illuminating documentary or a well-made, well-acted play? The campaigners against media "vices" have affected the ways the media are censored and regulated, but they have not helped to raise and extend artistic or journalistic standards. Christians are the "leaven" and the "salt" (*Matthew* 13:33 and 5:13) of the world, which means that they should encourage rather than dissuade, build up rather than cast down. The mass media need leavening and salt if they are to realize their potential for enriching our lives. Every Christian who praises and speaks about a well-told story, a truthful news report or an entertaining film is contributing to the general improvement of media content.

Once we have become aware that media content needs critical scrutiny we can begin to look out for that content which enriches our lives and culture.

Developing a critical awareness of the mass media environment and of mass media content deepens our perception of media culture and may also help us to become better communicators in our daily lives. It can do this by encourag-

ing us to reflect about the communication process itself.

If we ever think about communication, we tend to think that it is rather like sending letters through the mail. One human being or group of human beings sends a package of information to another individual or group. In a complex communication process this basic sequence is repeated time and time again as a sender becomes a receiver in turn. The most important element in this process is the message (the package of information) and second in importance is the sender (the transmitter of the message). The one who is being communicated with tends to be regarded only as a destination. This "postal" or transmission model of communication is the one which has traditionally characterized the mass media.

Critical awareness tends to highlight the deficiencies of the "postal" approach to communication. It alerts us to the extent to which we have been cast in the role of objects of communication, rather than as communicating subjects. We become ever more conscious of how advertisers and program makers bombard us with their messages while never giving us the chance to answer back. Our constant complaint becomes one that media makers are always speaking and never listening.

Communicative Action

Christian discernment demands that we go one step further than the recognition of the faults and flaws of the media. Not only must we criticize the media, we must also criticize ourselves. If we are honest we will admit that our everyday communication practice is characterized by a minimum of listening and a maximum of talking. Even when we say little out loud we can be so busy preparing our message that we fail to hear what is being said to us. We, just as often as the media communicators, cajole, harangue or manipulate instead of speaking openly and truthfully. We too have to learn a new way of communicating.

We might pray also for the people who report and edit the news. We could pray that journalists and editors be strengthened in their dedication to truth and fearless in their quest for it.

Authentic, full communication is the building up of a common world of understanding, or a "community of interpretation" in which meanings and values are shared. In John Macquarrie's words "communication takes place when some aspect of the shared world is lit up and made accessible to both parties in the discourse."[2] Shared discourse does not, of course, imply that we always agree with those with whom we communicate. It does imply that our disagreements are contained within a framework of mutual respect and a desire to come to a common understanding. This kind of *communicative action* presupposes that communication is not simply a means to an end, whether that end be persuasion, education or information, but a good in itself. To communicate in this manner is to affirm and celebrate human dignity, equality and solidarity.

At the heart of this communicative action is the ability and the willingness to listen. Listening requires that we focus on the person communicating as well as on the message being communicated. It requires that we attend to what is not being said, to the implicit and latent meanings that underpin all human communication. As we learn the art of "imaginative listening" we may begin to communicate in a less one-sided and self-centered way.[3] We shall become alert to the complexities and nuances of communication and be more circumspect in the expression of our own opinions. We might even begin to entertain the possibility that we could learn from others and perhaps, occasionally, change our minds.

In the effort of hearing what it is others are saying or trying to say (as opposed to what they seem to say), we make ourselves vulnerable. We may find ourselves touched more deeply by our encounters with people through the media as well as by direct personal encounter. The stories of war and famine we hear on the news may become more real to us. We may feel more deeply about people and events we know only through the television, radio or newspaper. We may discover that programs and music that once were so much background now have the power to engage our attention and move our hearts. In short, we may discover that 'imaginative listening' is not far removed from the contemplative spirit.

Media Culture and the Contemplative Spirit

The contemplative spirit can hardly be analyzed or defined, though one can give examples of it:

Socrates eagerly learning a new tune on his flute the night before he was to die; Luther deciding to plant an apple tree in the morning of the day on which the world would come to an end; St. Louis Gonzaga continuing to play during recreation time even if he knew his death would come that very night; the delight of the Zen master in watching the struggle of an ant in spite of the fact that he is hanging over an abyss, tied by a rope that is soon to be cut.[4]

What all these examples have in common is the ability of the contemplative to concentrate upon doing one act well for the sake of the act itself. The contemplative celebrates the world in the spirit of Christ's exhortation to leave aside anxiety and "take no thought for the morrow." (*Matthew* 6:26-34) While we so often rush from one action to another, busy with many things and attending to none, the contemplative is absorbed and attentive to one thing at a time. (Cf., *Luke* 10:38-42)

We shall have to learn this contemplative spirit if we are to integrate critical awareness and communicative action into daily Christian living. The contemplative spirit opens our life to the power of prayer because it leads us to take seriously what is communicated to us and what we communicate to others. Critical awareness and communicative action can then become prayerful reflection on and prayerful witness to the action of God in our lives and on our culture.

How many of us, so quick to condemn a sexually explicit or violent television program, have ever written to a broadcasting organization to praise an illuminating documentary or a well-made, well-acted play?

If we try to open ourselves to the contemplative spirit we shall begin to find ourselves seeing with Christ's eyes and hearing with Christ's ears. More often than not we will find that Christ's eyes see what we would rather not look at and Christ's ears hear the sounds we would prefer to ignore: sights and sounds of the poor, the hungry, the infirm, the sick, the handicapped, the lonely and the oppressed. Sights and sounds too which celebrate the worldly values of power and wealth, and which demean and trivialize human hopes and aspirations. We shall weep for and rage at the world brought to us in the media, and we shall pray for justice and peace, for mercy and forgiveness.

Yet Christ's eyes and Christ's ears also see and hear the sights and sounds we tend to take for granted. The media will delight us, console us, inform us, educate us and entertain us. Amidst the commercial pressures and demands to consume we shall find images and sounds that speak of the dignity and beauty of the natural world and of human beings. The news will bring us stories of courage and of encouragement, films will deepen our understanding of the human heart, and television will show us ordinary people enjoying the Olympics or watching royal weddings. Our prayer will be praise and wonder, filled with thanksgiving for the graces God dispenses through creation. Our media experiences will, as Damian Lundy observes of Sheila Cassidy, enrich and feed into our life and our prayer:

Sheila Cassidy, headline news after her experience of imprisonment and torture in Chile, has shown how I can pray through newspaper headlines or through the television news, as I watch it reflectively, making the appropriate response to God in these situations – anxiety, concern, gratitude, intercession.[5]

What Damian Lundy and Sheila Cassidy do not say is that we might pray also for the people who report and edit the news. We could pray that journalists and editors be strengthened in their dedication to truth and fearless in their quest for it. We might pray too that we might be more sensitive and discriminating hearers of the news, and more dedicated witnesses of the "good news" of Christ. The news is more than a record of far-off events, it springs also out of our daily world of home and work and we are makers of news as well as hearers. The news we bear, of God's love for us and all people, may not reach the headlines but it can enter and change the lives of the women and men we encounter each day.

In these days Christian discernment in a mass-mediated culture will bring together a critical awareness, communicative action and a contemplative spirit. The mass media will not make us gloomy and pessimistic, world-weary and cynical, because we shall be able to discern what is valuable and life giving in what they communicate. We shall strive to be realistic, but always remain hopeful of our culture. The contemplative spirit will fill us with that clear-seeing love and reverence for our culture and for other people that will inform our communication and so help us bring another part of our individual and corporate lives under the standard of Christ.

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Notes

1. The Phrase "Communicative Action" is borrowed from the work of German philosopher Jurgen Habermas.
2. John Macquarrie, *God-Talk: An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology*, (SCM Press, 1978), p. 74.
3. The idea of "imaginative listening" is taken from Andrew Louth. See his *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology*, (Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 29.
4. The examples are given by Raimundo Panikar in his article "The Contemplative Mood: A Challenge to Modernity," *Cross Currents*, Vol. XXXI, No. 3 (1981), p. 261.
5. Quoted in Damian Lundy, "The Beginnings of Prayer," *The Way*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (October, 1983), p. 282. Sheila Cassidy's comments come from her *Prayer for Pilgrims* (London, 1976).

4 How to Introduce Media Literacy in Your Pastoral Setting

Media literacy education provides a perfect opportunity for leaders to teach as Jesus did.

Teaching media literacy is a partnership, a journey of joint exploration by leader and participant, a co-learning. The model is not a hierarchical one where segments of information are expected to be memorized and regurgitated at the appropriate times. Rather, it is recognizing the "teachable moments" and capitalizing on participants' own knowledge and involvement in the media world that envelops them. Indeed, even the youngest students will probably know more than an adult teacher about current movies or popular music or the latest advertising campaign. Teachers and leaders should see themselves as facilitators rather than fact-givers.

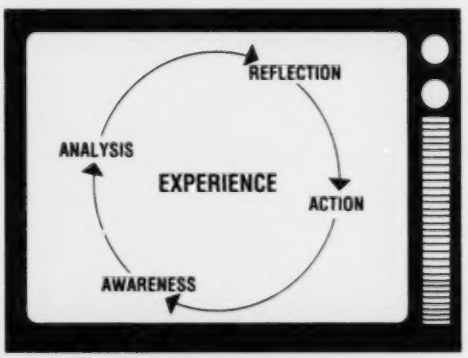
Thus, you don't have to watch a lot of television or be familiar with movie classics to lead a media literacy session. Nor do you need to have a degree in communications or journalism. You merely need to recognize the challenge, have some tools to work with, possess some enthusiasm and have a desire to help people grow. Along the way, you'll learn a lot yourself.

The Pastoral Circle: Making the Values Connection

A proven approach to process learning has been used in *Catholic Connections To Media Literacy*. Known under various names but primarily as the Pastoral Circle, its history goes back to the Observe/Judge/Act approach of the Catholic Family Movement of the 1950s. Refined in the work of educator Paulo Freire, the process has fueled the *consciencisization* movement in Latin America beginning with early literacy education to today's Christian base communities. In the religious education field, similar models have been introduced by James and Evelyn Whitehead and Tom Groome, and in the Peace and Justice community through the work of Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, SJ.

The Pastoral Circle consists of four steps: Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action. Together they provide a methodology to transform *experience into information* and *information into understanding* to create *personal ownership of actions*, whether personal, local, national or global. It is a particularly useful model for exploring social issues, such as homelessness or racial discrimination, where the issues seem so large and complex that we feel powerless to effect any real change. Using the Pastoral Circle framework, we soon identify steps we can take in the short term that can build toward long term impact.

Applied to the world of mass media where we too often have felt powerless against the forces of networks, Hollywood and media conglomerates, the Pastoral Circle provides a blueprint, a framework, to *confront, challenge and change* the way that television and all mass media touch our lives and those of our children. Rooted always in individual and group Personal Experience, the steps of the Pastoral Circle flow in an upward spiral — awareness and analysis leading to reflection and action which leads again to newer and deeper awareness, analysis, reflection and action.



In the *Awareness* step, participants explore a theme or principle, discovering points of tension where media connects with cultural and personal values. For example, youngsters might compare whether their action toys perform like the ones in the commercials; teens might break apart the "Top 40" list to become aware of how many hits are made by males and how many by females; a parents group might compare notes on the various ways their children of different ages respond to violent images. The Awareness step ideally

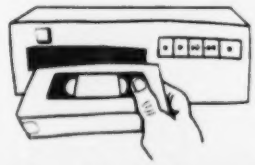
creates the "ah-ha!" moment that opens the door to learning, growth and change.

In the *Analysis* step we search for the political, economic, social and cultural factors that influence the problem and through which we have to work to come to some solutions. Discussion about how advertising segments the public into audience "targets" can help us understand how commercial interests determine much of the content and appeal of programming. Learning how the nightly news is gathered and edited can alert us to the limitations of broadcast news, what is *not* covered and where we can go to find the missing pieces.

Reflection is the step where we interface our faith and personal value system with the media experience we've named and the realities we've analyzed. In this step we search our ethical and philosophical traditions, the scriptures or contemporary Catholic thought — from Dorothy Day to John Paul II — to discover what values we can call on to inform our future choices in similar situations. The story of the marriage feast of Cana may give some insight about how to approach the portrayal of marriage and family life on television or the U.S. Bishops' Peace Pastoral may guide us in evaluating news reports of violence and war.

Finally, *Action*! This should be much more than just calling or writing about what we don't like in the media. Appropriate action might be something we do positively in our own lives — always consulting a TV guide before turning television on or making an effort to supplement TV news with longer stories in print or on public radio. It could be something we do locally — helping to start a parish video library or becoming involved in the citizen review of a local public access cable channel. Above all, actions need to be specific and do-able. Personal media behaviors are often deeply ingrained and do not change overnight, even with the best of intentions. Systemic changes in the media industry or in the government policies that regulate the field certainly do not happen quickly. We best accomplish long-term change by practical intermediate steps.

Simply put, we can approach the field of media literacy with four words: "Oh!" (Awareness); "How?" (Analysis); "So?" (Reflection); "Go!" (Action). Becoming aware of the



The VCR: Questions for a Family Reflection

The videotape recorder has become almost as commonplace in our lives now as the television set. The following questions provide an opportunity to help families become aware of how it has influenced their family media habits. It's also a model exercise for using the Awareness / Analysis / Reflection / Action process to gain insight and evaluate whether or not to take any action to change media behavior. Use it as a "warm-up" exercise for a home/school meeting, for a family retreat afternoon or to introduce the idea of media literacy to any adult group.

Awareness

- When did we get our VCR?
- What has happened since we got it? Who is using it? Who's not? Does anyone feel left out?

Analysis

- Who decides what to record, what tapes to rent and when to show them? What criteria do they use and how do they make the decision? Any conflicts about sharing the machine?
- How much are we spending? Can we afford less? More?
- If we were not watching videos, what would we be doing?

Reflection

- Is it right to create a home library of tapes by copying anything we want to? If not, what kind of rules should we set?
- Is our VCR usage contributing to or detracting from our family relationships?
- (For adults) Just because we can now have explicit movies in our home, does that mean we should?

Action

- What changes can we make to get the best out of our VCR?
- Should we build a library of family tapes that will both entertain and inspire us?
- What ways can we use it for positive interaction?
- Can we contribute to creating a parish video library to make more positive entertainment available to all members of the parish?

media culture, examining product and process, questioning the "fit" with our values and beliefs and taking appropriate action — these are the steps to active engagement with our media world. Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action weave in and out of each other like threads in a Navajo cloth.

"Like fish in water, we are seldom aware of the media environment that continually shapes our lives, values and attitudes. but today's mass media are creating a social environment that is radically different from the society of 25 or even 10 years ago."

Elizabeth Thoman, CHM

Coupled with the Four Principles of Media Literacy outlined earlier, the Pastoral Circle provides a potent tool to address the challenge of forming values in a media age.

You may have noticed that we've followed the steps of the Pastoral Circle in this book. Section One addressed the *Awareness* step by looking at the need for media literacy, offering some reflections on living in the information culture, examining your experience of media and presenting the Church's challenge with regard to media education. The *Analysis* step began with the four principles of media literacy and continued with some examples of each principle. Section Three, James McDonnell's article, "Christian Discernment in a Mass-Mediated Culture," is our *Pastoral Reflection* step. The remaining step is *Action*, which you can begin to do by using the sample sessions that follow.

Media Literacy and the Question of Production

When teachers and leaders hear the word "media" they often think "dollars" — and then dismiss the idea of media literacy classes or programs because "we can't afford the equipment."

Sure, high tech television programs do cost millions of dollars, but that doesn't mean that the opportunity to learn about media production is out of reach for schools and parishes with even the most meager budgets. Good equipment is often available at minimal or no cost, it's just a question of being creative.

In some of the sample sessions and learning modules, you don't need any hardware at all. Indeed, media literacy means not only to be able to analyze and evaluate the media that surrounds us but also to be able to *create media in a variety of forms*, to express oneself in sound and image as well as writing and speaking.

According to media literacy specialists, 30% of a class or course should be spent in production or in creating with media. Analysis and production work together: by producing a parish newsletter or videotaping a non-sexist commercial, students gain insight into how professional media is created. By putting media together ourselves we become better equipped to deconstruct, or take apart, the media presented to us everyday. Our ability to discern production techniques is heightened.

Very often, production activities flow logically as "Action" steps in the Pastoral Circle process. You might not be able to record a song in a fancy recording studio, but you can purchase a CD single (most of which feature an instrumental version of the hit song) and develop your own lyrics. You can't make *Batman Three*, but you can storyboard a short scene for a film. You can't make the news at five, but you can create with any camcorder a 2-minute feature story on a topic your group would like to see on the news. You might not be able to get an article on the front page of the local newspaper, but you can choose which stories will make the front page of your own desktop-published newsletter.

Just as a media literacy program is not complete without some production experience; neither is it complete with *only* production experience. That's what distinguishes media literacy education from career-oriented broadcast or journalism training. The goal of media literacy education is not to become amateur producers but rather *to engage* the media in our lives, *to interrogate and evaluate* its messages and techniques and then *to choose*, ultimately, whether to accept or reject the values conveyed. Production-oriented activities are an important, but not a dominating, educational tool.

How to Use the Sample Sessions

The Sample Sessions provide seven keys to unlock the potential of media literacy education in your Catholic school and parish. They are intended to *get you started*, not limit your possibilities. This is not the "bible" of media literacy, but a blueprint. Each sample session is geared to an age level as well as a theme flowing from an aspect of ministry to the particular group:

Sample Sessions

1. Junior High:
   In Your Face and Your Pocket: Who's After Your Allowance?
2. Senior High:
   Get the Scoop: Is it True News?
3. Late Adolescent:
   Who Do You Say I Am? Fashion, Ads and Beauty.
4. Adult Faith Formation:
   The New Religion: Advertising

5. Peace and Justice:
   Rights and Responsibilities in the Media Age
6. Marriage Preparation:
   TV Families: Myths, Make Believe and Magic
7. Teachers and Leaders:
   The Gospel Challenge of Media Literacy

Each includes a group process and directions for Awareness, Analysis, Reflection and Action activities suitable to the theme and the age group. Objectives are clearly identified and needed materials are outlined. You'll note that some of the sessions incorporate handouts or activities from Learning Modules contained in the Leaders Guide for *Living in the Image Culture* Media Literacy Workshop Kit™. There are also reading references to articles in *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age* (Media&Values #57.) Copies of these materials are contained in your ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy*** package and are the cornerstones on which the program is built.

Introducing the concept of media literacy first to parish leaders will make it possible to begin integrating media literacy education in a wide variety of school and parish educational opportunities.

Taken together the background articles in *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age*, the basic Media Literacy Learning Modules in *Living in the Image Culture* and the Catholic applications recommended in *Forming Values in a Media Age* provide a comprehensive package for introducing media literacy into almost every aspect of the educational ministry of a school or parish. Please note that Sample Session Seven (pp. 49-52) is a mini-workshop to introduce the process of media literacy education to your school faculty or parish leadership. Introducing the concept to them first will make it possible to begin integrating media literacy education in a wide variety of school and parish educational opportunities.

Though we may be most deeply concerned about the influence of television and media in the lives of the young, we must not forget senior citizens, young parents, women's groups or the father's club. Mass media so deeply influence all of our lives today that everyone, *at every age*, needs to learn much more about the skills of critical thinking and values analysis in relation to media.

Building Blocks for Curriculum Planning: *Explore and Connect*

We hope the sample sessions inspire you to generate your own outlines. The most effective media literacy program is not found in any book but rather in the creativity of teachers and the ability of adult leaders to create "instant curriculum" in our ever-changing media environment. Appendix A is a blank form which you can use to develop your own sessions.

To help you adapt the sample sessions and begin to create your own, note that each session is followed by an extensive section titled: *Explore and Connect: More Activities and Useful Resources.* It contains a list of videos, books, curriculum packages and other resources to support your media literacy program and that are available in the U.S. and/or Canada. Resources were selected to further explore the theme of the session or are on different themes but suitable for the age level. A second list recommends further background reading for leaders on the general topic of the session.

A complete description, current prices and where and how to order these resources may be found in the separate *Media Literacy Resource Directory* contained in your ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy*** package.

To get the most from these outside resources, you may have to add the *Pastoral Reflection* step to the recommended lesson plans. To add Pastoral Reflection to any lesson plan, take some time with Scripture or a favorite prayer book and find a passage that relates to your theme. This step is a significant part of the methodology proposed by ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy*** and is recommended, not to test your abilities as a scripture scholar, or as a decree on how one *should* act, but to assist you and your students in the formation of values in our complicated world. Appendix B offers even more suggestions for future sessions.

Video Overview and Integration: *Challenging the Image Culture*

Your ***Catholic Connections to Media Literacy*** package contains a 20-minute VHS video: *Challenging the Image Culture*. It will help you maximize use of all the other components. The video introduces the Principles of Media Literacy and the Pastoral Circle process and demonstrates media literacy educators teaching and interacting in a variety of settings.

Designed to motivate, inspire, and model, it provides an overview for the beginner and reinforcement for class or group learnings. Activities from *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit and resources from *Forming Values in a Media Age* are referenced for a realistic introduction to media literacy education. Follow suggestions in the Video Leader's Guide and in Sample Session Seven to make the most of this video resource.

5 Sample Sessions: Working with Youth

You Are What You Watch

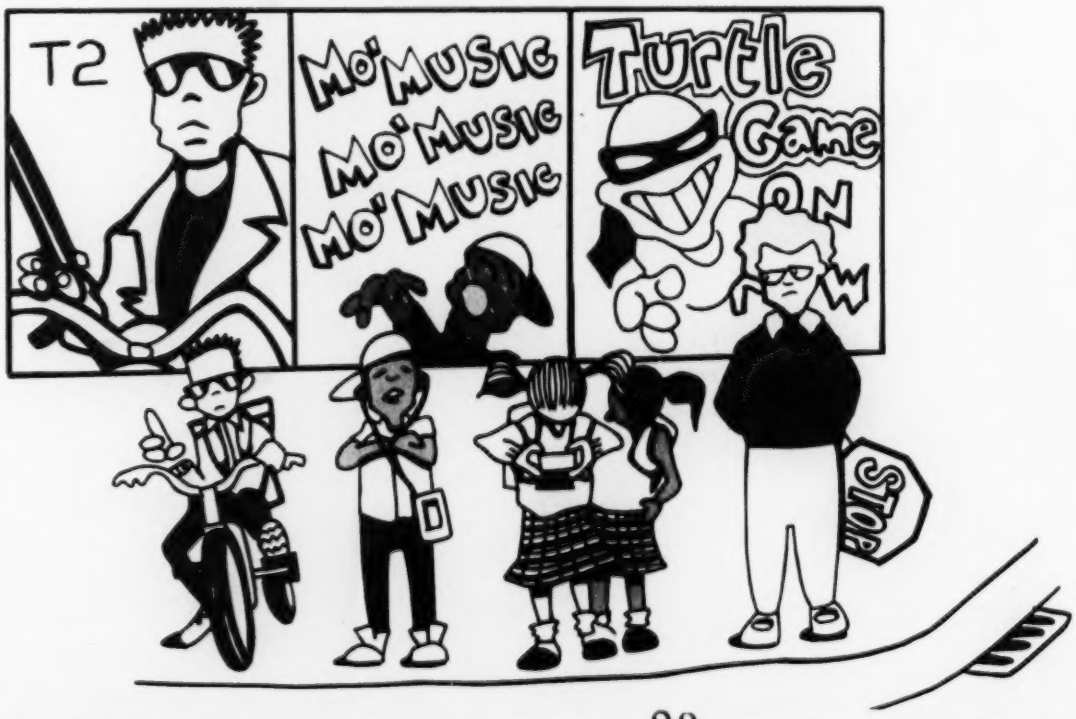
What does the image culture mean to youth? By the time they are three, children can watch television with sustained attention, respond to the imagery, sing the jingles, ask for the products. Children clock more than 4,000 hours of TV-watching before they even show up at school. Television images change constantly, a different shot, angle or new point of view every three seconds. That's 1,200 shots per hour, 30,000 shots per week,[1] for the average eight-year-old. Children spend more time watching TV than doing anything else, other than sleeping.

By the time they graduate from high school, students will have watched 16,000 hours of TV, and will have spent 13,000 hours in the classroom. A high school student consumes 400 films by the time he/she graduates. They also watch 18,000 violent acts, 650,000 television commercials at a rate of 700 per week and 15 hours of TV a week.[2]

Young people are also exposed to hundreds of "advertorials," ads disguised as articles, along with the "normal" ads in "their" magazines. They see product placement, that is, purchased space to highlight products, in films,

"Kids are big business, and big business needs youngsters compliant, vulnerable and hooked on their fads, fashions and addictions."

Ralph Nader



including paid placement and use of tobacco products, which may no longer be advertised on television. Image culture commercialism has even infiltrated former sanctuaries such as education. Channel One, Whittle Communication's ad-sponsored classroom news program, woos schools by offering "free" video equipment.

Catholic schools, like others, are enticed by the offers of groups like Whittle, but there is a price. Students in participating schools are required to watch a daily teen news program — complete with a two-minute commercial break. Consumer Reports suggests that schools should be "commercial-free zones," but if Whittle's lure is too difficult to resist, then infusing media literacy activities into language arts, social studies or religion can help counterbalance the impact of Channel One's commercialization and point of view.

Young people between the ages of 12 and 17 go to movies twice as often as those 18 and over.[3] Youngsters four to 12 years old control an estimated $8 billion in discretionary income annually and indirectly influence weekly household expenditures to the tune of $1 billion.[4] In 1991, companies spent five times as much on advertising to two to 12-year-olds than they did in the early '80s, to the tune of $500 million.[5]

Somebody wants that money. Some of those somebodies answer to major brand names such as Coke, Pepsi, Nike and Sony. Here's one example. Remember those cute singing raisins from a couple of years ago that danced and sang to I Heard It Through The Grapevine? In 1986 the California Raisin Advisory Board paid $120,000 for one year's rights to the song. The projected raisin sales in that year were $200 million. The projected merchandise sales from products featuring those dancing raisins: $250 million.[6]

By the time they collect their diplomas, high school students will have listened to 9,000 hours of music, played countless video games. In fact, teenagers watch two hours of MTV a day according to a 1990 study. As these experiences demonstrate, they grow up in a world that is moving from the print-based culture of the past to the image-based culture of the present.

If they were to go to church every Sunday from the day they were born until they graduated from high school, they would have spent one hour a week, 52 hours a year for a total of 936 hours listening to the messages of the Gospels. Less then 1,000 hours "paying attention" to God.

"Rock 'n Roll isn't simple, but it is here to stay... Young people do not need to be rescued from rock music. They do deserve to know and understand its many stories, messages, meanings and values."

Reynolds R. Ekstrom, *Media, Faith, & Families*

The image culture amplifies itself loudly and clearly in the experience of young people. On examination it becomes obvious that we cannot protect people from the barrage of images. The impossible task of stopping the flow is not the goal of media literacy. Instead, our challenge is to change the way people watch, the way they "read" the media. The following sample sessions are a first step on that journey.

Notes

1 Neil Postman, "Engaging Teenagers in the Great Conversation," *Phi Delta Kappan*, (January 1984).

2 *Neilsen Media Research*, (February 1991).

3 "Selling to Children," *Consumer Reports*, (August 1990), p. 518.

4 Consumer's Union, quoted in "Commercial Break," *Utne Reader*, (January/February 1992), p. 59.

5 *Common Cause Magazine*, (May/June 1991).

6 Mark Crispin Miller, "Gonna Hawk Around the Clock Tonight," *Mother Jones*, (November 1988).

SAMPLE SESSION

1

Junior High

In Your Face and Your Pocket: Who's After Your Allowance?

This session is directed at the junior high age group. It can easily be adapted for middle or junior high school or a junior high ministry program. With a little adaptation, the session would also work well with high school or youth ministry programs. The session could be led by a teacher, parent, youth minister or volunteer.

Objectives:

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Identify the placement of particular products in film.
- List the advertisements they see in film.
- Learn to keep a media log.
- Have fun.

Leader Preparation:

- Preview the video and find and record the counter number for sequences that incorporate obvious "product placements" — i.e. recognizable brand name products (soft drinks, snack foods, candy, cosmetics, cars, etc.) that appear to be a "normal" part of the background but whose brand names are clearly obvious. (Reese's Pieces in *E.T.* for instance.) As a way of off-setting the increasing cost of movie-making, "product placement" is now big business in the movie industry with corporations paying substantial sums to have their products incorporated into a hit movie. Often scenes involving such products have little to do with the story and indeed may even interrupt the action or narrative of the film. In *Uncle Buck*, the following provide excellent illustrations of product placement.
    1) The scene with Frosted Flakes and the vacuum cleaner.
    2) The scene with the giant pancake.
    3) The scene with the lunch tray at the younger boy's school.
    4) The scene where Uncle Buck is doing the laundry.
- Before the meeting write the names of familiar products, like Coke, Nike, Pepsi, etc., on removable labels and hide them around your meeting room (under chairs, tables, inside cupboards, etc.). Use three product names for every attendee (you can repeat product names if you run out).
- Also write one "value" word on a label for each participant. Use words like: friendship, love, peace, trust, hope, etc. Do not place these around the room until you are showing the movie clips—have a volunteer do this discreetly at that time.
- Adapt a copy of the media log format from *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit (Handout #1) to the needs of this exercise. Have participants take it home to log the ads they locate or "bust" in the movies, music videos or TV they see.

Materials Needed:

- Optional: Select a contemporary PG-rated video that incorporates a large number of "product placements" in the film. (See notes below on recognizing product placements.) A good example is *Uncle Buck* starring John Candy.
- A VCR and TV monitor (preferably with remote control).

- Some "props" for the room, for example: a Coke can, a box of cereal, a pizza box, some fast food packaging, if available, some posters of recent movies. These are often available free from local cinemas if the show has finished its local run.
- Markers and paper, enough for one sheet for each person.
- Brightly colored removable labels (one packet).
- Sheets of newsprint.
- Small stars or buttons for each participant. If you have a button maker, make your own buttons that say "Adbuster," or "Ad-detective."

Time Required: 1 1/2 hours

Directions

Introduction
(5 minutes)

A. Welcome participants.

B. Start the session with a short prayer.

C. State the objectives of the meeting, in terms the group will understand:
- To have fun.
- To get to know each other.
- To think about movies.
- To become "Ad-detectives" or "Adbusters."

Awareness
(30 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
- To find hidden ads in the meeting room.
- To recall recent movies you've seen.
- To have fun doing it.

B. Break the group into three or four teams. Have the group decide on a name for their team and write it on a sheet of newsprint. Place the sheet on a wall. Explain that the teams are advertising detectives. Hidden throughout the room are names of famous products written on brightly colored pieces of paper. Your task as a team is to uncover as many product names as you can in 10 minutes. When you find one, peel it off and stick it on your team's page.

Celebrate the winning group with applause.

(Alternate activity: *Logos: What's In A Name*. Copy some logos from magazines or newspapers and remove all printed words identifying words or letters, leaving just the graphic. For example, Pepsi would be the blind-like slats of the circle. Break into groups of four and have each group guess the product.)

C. Pictionary: Draw the title of the last movie you saw.

Break into groups of four, then give each group a marker and five sheets of white paper. Have individuals in each group recall the name of the last movie they saw. Have members, one at a time, draw, pictionary fashion, the movie. Explain that they cannot use the words of the title, they must use pictures.

On the fifth sheet have the small group list all the movies they can remember seeing in the last six months (include videos, TV and movie theater viewing).
Write these all on a large sheet of newsprint.

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Feedback: Ask participants to recall any specific products or ads they remember seeing in their list of films. Write them on newsprint.

Analysis
(20 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
   1) To be adbusters and find the ads hidden in the movie clips.

B. Ask participants to write down as many products as they can see in the clips.

C. Show the movie clips.

D. Re-show the clips and point out ads they may have missed, or illustrate how product placement is often anti-realistic. For example, in *Uncle Buck*, the scene with the Frosted Flakes has little to do with the story and is barely funny.

Important: Either before the session starts or while participants are watching the movie clips, have a volunteer (or several) hide the "value" labels around the room.

Pastoral Reflection
(20 minutes)

Suggested Scripture: *Matthew* 13:31-32. (Parable of the Mustard Seed)

A. Read the passage to the group. Explain to the group there are "mustard seeds" hidden throughout the room and that they should try to find them. When found, they should place the labels on a sheet of newsprint.

B. Ask the group to briefly share their feelings about differences between the newsprint with product names and the one with gifts.

Action
(15 minutes)

- Give each participant a button or star designating them an official "ad-buster." Help the group to brainstorm ways they can "bust" ads out of their lives—e.g., not wear T-shirts with product ads on them, buy ordinary jeans instead of fancy designer names, put cereals and snack foods in plain containers, etc. Make the list into a poster to hang in the room. Encourage follow up discussion and sharing for a few days or weeks until actions begin to take root in their lives.

- ***Ongoing*:** Pass out adapted media log. Assign tasks for the next month or two: have kids log the ads they find in movies, TV and the rock videos they see.

Explore and Connect:
More Activities and Useful Resources

In this sample session we explored the role of advertising in film, something that affects adults as well as young people. The movies are only one place where advertisers "capture" us. The following are some additional resources to use to help young people re-examine their media culture. Remember to adapt them by adding a pastoral reflection step as explained in Section Four. For younger groups, like junior high, strive for active participation in some fashion.

Teaching Tools:

Codes in parentheses tell you where to locate details about the resource in the Media Literacy Resource Directory

- In *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit ™: (5K)
  - Learning Module B5: *Toy Commercials*
  - Learning Module B6: *The Selling of Cereal*

- *The Electronic Lifeline: A Media Exploration for Youth* — A course for Christian youth on news, music, violence, media sexuality and advertising/identity. (2)
- *"Buy Me That, Too!"* — a video for kids on advertising tricks and techniques contains an excellent 4-minute segment on product placements. (5D)
- *Selling Addiction: A Workshop Kit on Alcohol and Tobacco Advertising:* helps kids learn how they get you hooked and keep you hooked. (5D)
- *Project PSA* Get your kids involved in this national project to create public service announcements on preventing drug abuse. (5I)
- *Project Look, Listen, Think, Respond* — another classroom project with activities to evaluate prime-time TV shows. (5I)
- "Message in the Music"/ an activity for youth in *Media, Faith and Families*. (5E)
- "Advertising: Exploring the Consumer Culture in the Classroom" chapter 5 of *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery in Instruction*. Dozens of activities and ideas. (2)

Background Reading for Leaders:

- "Hollywood: The Ad," by Mark Crispin Miller, *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1990. (5D)
- *Access Guide to Pop Culture*, edited by Reynolds R. Ekstrom, Don Bosco Multimedia. (5K)
- *Dancing in the Dark: Youth, Popular Culture and the Electronic Media*, various authors, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (5G)
- Check the *Readers' Guide* for recent articles on "product placement."
- Articles and books by John Kavanagh, SJ, particularly *Following Christ in a Consumer Culture* (Orbis, 1986).

SAMPLE SESSION

2

Senior High

Get the Scoop: Is It True News?

This session is directed toward a high school classroom situation, particularly an English or social studies class. But don't hesitate to try this with a youth ministry group—or an adult Peace and Justice group. We need to "read" the news critically to discern the truth of the information. This session will work with any group, with only minor adaptations for developmental differences.

Objectives:

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Understand that news is created and selective.
- Describe differences in print and video versions of news.
- Analyze news reporting techniques.
- Clarify their role in discerning the "truth" of the news.

Leader Preparation:

- If possible, read *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in the Media*, Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, and/or *Media&Values* Issue #50: *News for the '90s.*

Materials Needed:

- A video of a news report, preferably the same story covered on national and local news.
- Photocopies (enough for all participants) of the same news story as featured in:
  1) *The New York Times, Los Angeles Times* or *Washington Post*
  2) *U.S.A. Today*
  3) *Time* and/or *Newsweek*
  4) *The Christian Science Monitor*
  5) Your local daily paper
  6) Your diocesan newspaper, the *National Catholic Reporter* or other national Catholic news publication.
- Pens and paper for all participants.
- Copies of Handout #4: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy*, from *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit™, for each participant.
- A VCR and TV monitor.

Time Required:

1 1/2 hours

Directions

Introduction
(10 minutes)

A. Outline the four principles of media literacy.

B. Pass out Handout #4: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy.*

C. Explain how we will be using the four principles of media literacy to examine the ways news is reported.

Awareness
(15 minutes)

A. Ask for four volunteers. Send three volunteers out of the classroom and read the following passage to the first volunteer:

There was a green car traveling west on Front Street. As it came to the corner of Front and Brown an elderly woman opened the front door of Baxter's corner store. Her small dog, a white fluffy poodle, ran out the door, past a tall man buying a newspaper. The man was smoking a cigarette. The green car swerved to avoid the poodle and a black truck tried to avoid the green car and hit the newspaper stand. The cigarette was knocked from the man's hand and landed on the poodle, which burst into flames. Apart from the tragedy of the poodle, no one was hurt.

B. Call second volunteer into room, then have the first volunteer tell the second as much of the story as they can, without assistance from the class.
C. Call the third volunteer into the room. Have the second volunteer relay the story to the third.
D. Call the fourth person in. Have the third person relay the story, then have the fourth person tell it as they heard it to the class.
E. Re-read the original story to the class.

F. Feedback: Ask what the students noticed about the previous activity.

Analysis
(30 minutes)

A. Have students divide a piece of paper into two columns. At the top of the left column write the word "video." At the top of the right column write the word "print."
B. Ask students to make notes of things that strike them in the upcoming video.
C. Watch the video news reports.
D. Hand out the copies of the same news stories in each of the papers or magazines.
E. Have students read the stories in the papers and make notes on similarities or differences between them in the two columns on their paper.

F. Feedback: Ask students to talk about:
   1) The differences/similarities between the video versions of the same story: How was the clip introduced? Did each story contain the same information? What was included? What was not included? Does this make a difference? How was the information arranged?
   2) The differences between different printed versions: Are there different headlines? How does the headline affect the tone of the piece? Is there different information in the stories? What is the difference? Are certain facts omitted? Are there differences in length?
   3) The differences/similarities between the print and video version: How does ad placement in either medium affect the story? Examine the amount of fact, i.e., statistics as opposed to opinion, i.e., judgmental words.

Pastoral Reflection
(10 minutes)

Suggested Scripture: *John* 8:31-37. ("The Truth shall make you free.")
1) In what ways do you think telling the truth is important in your life? the world? the media?
2) If you were to describe your truth telling, would you be more like print or TV? Why?

Action
(20 minutes)

- Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 to write up an account of this session in one of the three following formats (add additional formats if you wish):
  1) tabloid newspaper style. Include outrageous headline.
  2) feature magazine style (like *Time* or *Newsweek*)
  3) quick TV headline followed by 45-second story with sound bite

- ***Or:*** to help students learn to articulate their opinion or point of view on public issues, practice calling a radio talk show. The Media Literacy Workshop Kit™: *Citizenship in a Media Age* contains an excellent process for such an activity with youth or adults.

- ***Ongoing:*** Have the class, or small groups within the class, adopt an issue, like the environment (for a geography focus), or women in society (social studies focus), or political campaigns (as the rhetoric section of an English class). For a semester have students clip news stories or magazine articles that deal with the issue and bring them to class. Examine the differences and similarities in the reports searching for the truth of the story.

Explore and Connect:
More Activities and Useful Resources

This sample session explores myths about newsmaking and truthtelling in the news. Other themes you might like to address with your group include truth in advertising: Do ads lie? How? A special focus for this age-group might be the marketing of military service as a career opportunity. Or try experimenting with activities in some of the resources below.

Codes in parentheses tell you where to locate details about the resource in the Media Literacy Resource Directory

Teaching Tools:

- In *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit™: (5K)
  - Learning Module B2, *Media Construct Reality*
  - Learning Module C2, *Create Your Own News Story*
- *News for the '90s:* A Media Literacy Workshop Kit™ on *Values in the News* includes sessions on how to analyze news, how photos can deceive, what's missing in the news. (5A)
- *How to Read a Newspaper* — low-cost handout for all ages from Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting. (5A)
- *Images Of Conflict:* A Media Literacy Workshop Kit™ on Learning from Media Coverage of the Gulf War. The kit includes a 12-minute video: *Lines in the Sand*, plus an issue of *Media&Values* magazine: *The Media: In War and Peace* containing the article: "Marketing the Military," (p.10-12). (5I)
- *Citizenship in a Media Age:* A Media Literacy Workshop Kit™ on *Building the Common Good* with its companion issue of *Media&Values* magazine: *Rethinking Democracy*. Deals with media coverage of politics and public affairs. (5B)
- *All the News that Fits* / documentary video on how U.S. network news covered Central America. Powerful. (5I)
- Reading the News: Interpreting Form and Content, chapter 6 of *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery in Instruction*. Dozens of activities and ideas. (2)

Further Background for Leaders:

- Check your library for recent issues of *Extra!*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Washington Journalism Review*, and *World Press Review*.
- *Questioning the Media: A Critical Introduction* by John Downing and others. (2)
- *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* by Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon. (5A)
- *Reading the News* by Michael Schudson and Robert Karl Manoff. (5A)
- *News for the '90s*, Issue #50 of *Media&Values* magazine. (5A)

SAMPLE SESSION

3

Late Adolescent

"Who do you say I am?" Fashion, Ads and Beauty

This section is designed for the late adolescent group but can easily by adapted for use with either a younger or an adult group. The media often present images of "beauty" only on a superficial level. Our challenge as people of faith is to "see with new eyes," to see the beauty within.

Objectives:

By the end of the session participants will be able to:
- Recognize and criticize examples of media objectification.
- Analyze male and female roles in media.
- Identify male and female stereotypes in advertising.
- Commit to treat people as gifts, not objects.

Leader Preparation:

- Read background issues of *Media&Values* magazine: #48: *Men, Myth and Media* and #49: *Redesigning Women.*

Materials Needed:

- Magazines, preferably directed at different age and racial groups.
- Glue sticks.
- Copies for each participant of Handout #10: *Hard Sell and Soft Sell Techniques* from the Media Literacy Workshop Kit™ on *Living in the Image Culture.*
- Copy of appropriate pop song for pastoral reflection, e.g. Michael W. Smith's *My Place In This World*, or Michael Jackson's *Black or White.*
- Blackboard and chalk or blank newsprint and markers.
- Life-size cutout of human shape (newsprint).
- Make up copies of the ad log described below. Have one log sheet ready for each group of 4.

Time Required:

2 hours

Directions

Introduction
(15 minutes)

A. State the objectives of the session.
   1) To understand principles of media literacy.
   2) To examine ways men and women are portrayed in ads.
   3) To challenge stereotypes of being male and female.

B. Choose an appropriate ice-breaker for the group.

C. Begin session with a prayer. *Luke* 9:18-22 ("Who do you say I am?") may be appropriate.

Awareness
(20 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
   1) To examine the ways men and women are portrayed in advertisements.
   2) To identify stereotypes.
   3) To explore differences in the roles of men and women in ads.

B. In the large group ask for definitions of beauty. Write responses on board or flip chart.

C. Break into groups of four or five by gender; do not mix female and males in the same group. Have groups pick ads from magazines for the opposite gender; i.e., males pick depictions of women, females pick depictions of men.

D. Possible discussion questions:

   1) Why did you pick the ad you did?
   2) Does this ad represent a real person or an ideal? In what ways?
   3) How is the person portrayed? Are they in control? Vulnerable?
   4) Does the ad present men or women the way you see them? How, or why not?
   5) In what ways does the ad create reality?

Analysis
(50 minutes)

A. State the purpose of activity:
   1) To challenge perceptions of gender roles in ads.
   2) To show how people are portrayed as objects to be used.
   3) To illustrate the power of ads.

B. Pass out and discuss Handout #10: *Hard and Soft Sell Techniques*. Use the questions provided. Here are some further suggestions:

   1) Who do you think profits from the portrayals of women or men in ads?
   2) In the ads you picked, whose interests are at the heart of the way people are portrayed?
   3) What, in general, does your ad say men or women are like—for example, how are the men or women acting?
   4) What does the ad say about their place in the world?

C. Break into groups of four, this time mixing sexes. Where possible, have two males and two females in each group. Have each participant show their ad to the mixed group and explain why they picked it. The group should follow up with discussion around these questions:

   1) How is the portrayal realistic? unrealistic?
   2) How does the way people are portrayed influence the way we see them?
   3) Do the ads you picked present accurate representations of women or men in your life: girlfriend/boyfriend, sister/brother, mother/father etc?
   4) What does the ad you picked say about the role of women or men in society? Do you think what is implied is true?
   5) What stereotypes does it perpetuate? For example are the men "in control," without emotion, or are they sensitive? Are the women in positions of power or seen as weak or used to get your attention?

D. Have each group examine the ads one at a time and fill out the following log.

Ad #	What is changed about the person?	What is the effect of the change?	What products were implied to create change?	What techniques were used (air brushing, lighting etc.)
1				
2				
3				
4				

E. State the purpose of the activity:
1) To illustrate the ways God sees us as unique creations.
2) To explore together each person as a gift not an object.
3) To challenge our stereotyping of others.

Pastoral Reflection
(20 minutes)

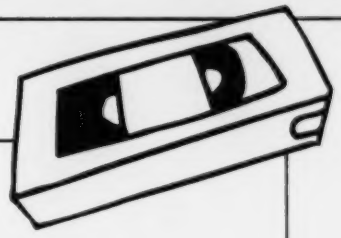
Suggested Scripture: *John* 4:7-15: (The living water of eternal life)

In a journal or small group discussion, suggest that participants deal with the following questions: What does the story mean for the way I see men/women? What can I do to see people as gifts rather than objects?

Action
(15 minutes)

- Have individuals tear words or pictures from magazines that represent the way they see themselves. Have participants stick the words or pictures to the "paper human" shape you cut out. While they are doing this play an appropriate popular song about seeing more than the surface, for example Michael W. Smith's My Place In This World, or Michael Jackson's Black or White.

- ***Ongoing*:** Have participants search through magazines they have at home for examples of ads that present objectionable portrayals of men or women. Start a group scrapwall by placing ads on wall. Have the group pick the worst ad of the month. Write a group letter to the publisher of the magazine to explain what the group found offensive and how they would like to see the ad changed. (See what happens.) You could also write further letters to the ad agency that developed the ad and to the corporation that approved and paid for the advertising campaign. If you develop this activity over several months, compare responses from the different persons you write.



Explore and Connect:
More Activities and Useful Resources

This session dealt with the issue of beauty and the way the image culture often defines it for us . Other stereotypes filter through the media and find their way into our consciousness, perhaps even shape our values. The sessions listed below could be useful follow-up activities, they deal with sexism, gender and the ways the media make up the world.

Teaching Tools:

Codes in parentheses tell you where to locate details about the resource in the Media Literacy Resource Directory.

- In *Living In The Image Culture* Workshop Kit™: (5K)
  - Learning Module B2: *Media Construct Reality*
  - Learning Module B7: *Music TV and Me*
  - Learning Module B8: *Image Culture*
  - Learning Module B9: *Beauty*
  - Learning Module B10: *Gender Roles*
- *Break The Lies That Bind*, a Media Literacy Workshop Kit™ on Sexism in the Media and its accompanying issues of *Media&Values* Magazine: *Men, Myth and Media* and *Redesigning Women*. Contains six sessions with a variety of activities on this theme. (5F)
- The following videos are long but have excellent content and could be broken into shorter segments for group sessions: (5F)
  - *Still Killing Us Softly* — images of women in advertising
  - *Stale Roles/Tight Buns* — images of males in advertising
  - *Warning: The Media May Be Dangerous to Your Health* — violence to women in ads
  - *Dream Worlds* — violence to women in music videos
  - *What's Wrong with this Picture?* —how media techniques stereotype women
- *Video, Violence and Values* — three sessions to decode sexual violence in "slasher" films and videos. (5I)

Further Background for Leaders:

- *Are They Selling Her Lips?* by Carol Moog. (5D)
- *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf. (5F)
- *Gender Advertisements* by Erving Goffman. (5F)
- "Sex, Lies and Advertising" — fascinating article by Gloria Steinem acknowledging how *Ms* magazine compromised editorial copy to get advertisers. (5D)
- See the *Media Literacy Resource Directory* for Sections on Sexism/Gender (5F) and Violence (5I).

6 Sample Sessions: Working with Adults

The Work of Our Hands: Idolatry in the Consumer Culture

If you are like most people, by the time you reach age 65 you will have spent two years trying to return phone calls to people who are unavailable, three years in meetings, four years cleaning house, five years in line, six years eating and seven in the bathroom. The average American spends 13 years of his or her life watching television. You will spend only four and a half months in church.

Given those numbers, if a modern-day Pilate offered us a choice between the images of Christianity and those of culture, it is clear there wouldn't be much competition. Would we choose the glittering, shimmering superficiality of this electronic Barabbas? Would we let Christ go to his death due to our fascination with the empty promises of our electronic savior?

Thomas Merton sheds light on this question. Merton researched the "Cargo Cults" of the South Pacific which sprang up as white colonialists took over the area. The cults developed along the same lines in various places. White colonialists arrived, the indigenous people watched the powerful culture and activities of their white bosses and rulers, great ships would arrive with goods for the rulers, the indigenous people developed cults and rituals to access the spiritual or mythic powers that brought goods to the whites. They wanted cargo too. One group noticed that the whites placed fresh flowers in vases around their houses. Thinking there was a relationship between this and

> ***"America has become a game show. Winning is all that matters. Cash prizes. Get rich quick. We are turning the commonweal into the Commonwheel of Fortune."***
>
> **Norman Lear**

cargo they took to decorating not only their homes, but entire villages with flowers.

Of course, the cargo never came to them. The indigenous people did not have all the information, or the knowledge behind it, to reveal the vast apparatus behind their overlords. Merton points out our own susceptibility to cargo cults:

Is there really much difference, though, between cargo and the coming of the good life promised in our fabulous modern consumer advertising? We Americans have to keep buying and consuming. The worst thing you can do here in America is hold on to the past when the future is bursting in on you all the time in the form of new cars, new fashion designs, new houses, new styles of life.[1]

"The price of a bar of soap includes the production costs of the 'soap opera' that tells about a brand of cleanser — and a style of life. We pay when we wash, not when we watch. What's more, we pay even if we never watch — or do not like what we watch."

George Gerbner

In suggesting that consumerism is the cargo cult of the information age, Merton illustrates the need for us to become media literate.

Neil Postman recasts Merton's challenge into contemporary terms; you may imagine the word media replacing television in this quote:

When a powerful new medium like television enters a culture, the result is not the old culture plus the new medium, but a new culture altogether. The effect is similar to what happens if you add a drop of red dye to a beaker of water: you end up with a new color throughout. It does not seem to me (we) have yet taken its measure. We speak about America as if television has merely been added to it and little else has changed. Americans watch television, but we have not yet reached the point where we watch ourselves watch it.[2]

Although television is the most prevalent outlet of the image culture, it's not alone. All media need to be viewed through the filter of our faith for us to remain authentic to the image of Christ.

The issue then, for us as educators, is how do we examine questions of religious meaning in the media age? The Pontifical Council on Social Communication echoes Merton's sentiments about cargo myths and offers this critique:

Indeed the power of media extends to defining not only what people will think but even what they will think about. Reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance. Thus de facto silence can be imposed upon individuals and groups whom the media ignore, and even the voice of the Gospel can be muted, though not entirely stilled, in this way.[3]

The consciousness raising provided by media literacy and the Pastoral Circle in the following sample sessions is one step toward elevating the message of the Gospel so it might be heard above the distractions of the image culture.

The answer to the dilemma of how to attune persons of any age to the religious dimensions of media is not an easy one. It will not be arrived at by a diatribe against the media. The key is not harangue: it is rather analysis leading to action. By helping those we serve to understand how media work, by encouraging them toward an appropriate skepticism backed by a developed aesthetic sense and by encouraging our colleagues to pay more attention to the broad issue of media, we will have made a good beginning.

"In the gospel according to Madison Avenue, what we buy defines who we are. A healthy spirituality can open our hearts to what is real."

John Kavanaugh, SJ

Notes

[1] Thomas Merton, *Cargo Cults of the Pacific: Love and Living*, (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), p. 83.

[2] Neil Postman, *The Parable of the Ring Around the Collar: Conscientious Objections*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), p. 66.

[3] *Aetatis Novae*, Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications, Pontifical Council on Social Communications, (Origins, NC Documentary Service, March 26, 1992), Vol. 21, No. 42.

SAMPLE SESSION

4

Adult Faith Formation

The New Religion: Advertising

The Gospels ask us to put our faith in Christ. The culture asks us to put our faith in Pepsi, Nike and General Motors. This module explores the "religious" nature of values in the media. It can be used with any young adult or adult group, including parenting groups or small Christian communities. It might also be integrated into a reflection weekend or general retreat program or perhaps be the single focus of a staff or faculty retreat day.

Objectives:

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Identify the various levels at which advertisers appeal.
- Examine their own consumption practices and their effects.
- Explore the ways advertisers meet the human need for meaning.
- Learn the principles of media literacy.
- Discuss the religious nature of advertising.

Leader Preparation:

- Read major articles in *Media &Values* #57: *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age* especially "The Power of Images," "Rise of the Image Culture," "Television: The Search for Meaning" and "Storytellers Shape Spiritual Values."
- Review the Media Literacy Workshop Kit™: *Living in the Image Culture*, especially the Introductory "A" Learning Modules.
- Review the background information on the Four Principles of Media Literacy in Chapter Two of this booklet.
- Preview the video: *Challenging the Image Culture.*
- Pre-record 10 or 12 high-profile television commercials (Coke, Nike, AT&T, beer ads, car ads and other ads for other well-known consumer products).

Materials Needed:

- A videotape copy of some preselected commercials.
- Several magazines. (Your local library will often provide a selection of old magazines at no cost.)
- Pens and paper for all participants.
- Copies of these handouts from *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit™ for all participants:
  Handout #2: *Advertising: The New Religion*
  Handout #4: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy*
  Optional: Handout #9: *Myths of the Image Culture*
- A VCR and TV monitor (preferably with remote control).
- Cassette player and a copy of the song *Losing My Religion* by R.E.M. (On their 1991 *Out Of Time* release.)

Time Required:

2 hours

Directions

Introduction
(10-15 minutes)

A. Welcome participants: Ask participants to introduce themselves to each other.

B. Outline goals of session:
- To learn the four principles of media literacy.
- To explore the ways advertisers appeal to the need for meaning.
- To explore our own consumption practices and their effects.

C. Start the session with a short prayer.

Awareness
(25 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
- To examine advertising's mythic power and appeal.

B. Break the large group into smaller groups of four. Cover the front of the TV or blank out the screen so it is not visible. Play the commercial clips.

C. Ask participants to guess what they were listening to. If the product was not mentioned, have them guess the product. Ask them what pictures they saw in their imaginations.

D. Re-cue the video, revealing the screen. Show the video clips again. Then ask participants to discuss any recent purchase. Some questions to explore:
1) If you have bought any items shown, did advertising play any part in the purchase?
2) Do you feel advertising affects you? In what ways?
3) What symbols or myths do you see in ads?
4) Do ads offer, through visual hint or innuendo, a sense of participation in a community?
5) Is community in ads different from community in "church?" In what ways?
6) Which community is more appealing?

Other questions can be found in *Living in the Image Culture* Learning Module A3: *Are Advertising and TV Our New Religion?*

E. Feedback: Have small groups report back to the whole. Record responses on newsprint.

Analysis
(30 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
- To explore the religious impact of advertising.
- To examine fallacies in advertising myths.

B. Pick some slogans from advertising campaigns that seem to speak to particular religious questions and write them on newsprint. You might help the group get started with some suggestions like the following: "Coke is it." "Why ask why?" Discuss these in a large group. How do these ads attract? What do the slogans suggest? What needs do they meet?

C. *Alternate activity:* Use Handout #9: *Myths of the Image Culture* to generate discussion. Have the small groups discuss each of the myths in turn.

D. Feedback: Ask group members to comment on their discussion. Some suggested questions include: What religious symbolism did you discover in ads? How did the slogans you picked answer "religious" needs? Do you think advertising offers an alternate faith? What does the word community mean to you?

E. Pass out copies of Handout #4: *Four Principles of Media Literacy*. Using the background discussion in Chapter Two, lead the group through a discussion of each of the principles. Apply the principles to Michael Warren's concept of "cultural agency" (p. 18-19 of *Impact of Images*). Can media literacy encourage "cultural agency" in ourselves? our children? our families?

F. *If you have time:* Cue up the video, *Challenging the Image Culture*. After viewing it (or selected sections of it), discuss how media literacy education can help combat the negative impact of the image culture as well as enhance its positive aspects. Brainstorm how to integrate media literacy education into school or parish life.

Pastoral Reflection
(25 minutes)

Suggested Scripture reading: *Mark* 11:15-18 (The Cleansing of the Temple) or Mark 15:6-15 (Pilate's Release of Barabbas). Or another reading for powerful impact is Psalm 115.

A. Replay the tape of the commercials with the sound off and read the passage (you can use any of the above passages, we include this one to show the effect).

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands;
They have mouths but cannot speak;
they have eyes but cannot see;
They have ears but hear not;
they have noses but cannot smell;
They have hands but feel not;
they have feet but walk not;
They utter no sound from their throat.
Their makers shall be like them,
everyone that trusts them.

B. When you have finished the reading, turn off the TV and play the song *Losing My Religion* by R.E.M. as a closing reflection.

Action
(25 minutes)

- Have each group of four choose a word from the following list and write a 60-second script for their word, using images, sounds and narration. Each group should act out or read their script to the larger group.

Faith	Hope	Compassion	Community
Love	Justice	Peace	Life

- ***Or:*** Discuss individual action steps to reduce the amount of advertising in our lives—for example, not wearing clothing with names of consumer products on them. Write up the suggestions as a "manifesto" and publish it in the parish bulletin or newsletter.

- ***Ongoing:*** Have participants keep a Media Log (Module A2 in *Living in the Image Culture*) for at least a week. Concentrate on advertising and commercials. Encourage them to collect print ads or advertising slogans and make side comments about their "religious" meanings. Copy down billboards they pass on the street or jot down ideas and jingles from commercials on radio and television. At the end of the week, encourage a thoughtful, prayerful reflection on the "meaning" promoted by ads for consumer products. Which types of products tend to use more "religious" messages? How do we buy products we need without "buying into" the myths of the image culture?

Explore and Connect:
More Activities and Useful Resources

This session dealt with the religious appeal of advertising and the values "preached" by the image culture. These are powerful themes that cut to the heart of our contemporary dilemma as Christians living in a mass media world. While it is easy to complain about the loss of community values to consumer ones, it's not so easy to change our own personal lifestyle to avoid the excesses of consumerism. The modules and resources below are suggested as follow-up activities to further explore this challenge.

Teaching Tools:

Codes in parentheses tell you where to locate details about the resource in the Media Literacy Resource Directory

- Sample Session Six: *Families In The Media: Myth, Make Believe and Magic* (pp. 44-48).
- In *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit™: (5K)
  - Learning Module A2: *The Media Log*
  - Learning Module B1: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy*
  - Learning Modules B8: *The Image Culture*
- *Media, Faith and Families*: Vol. I—*A Parish Ministry Guide* & Vol. II—*A Parents Guide to Family Viewing*. (5E)
- The following videos contain themes and concepts that could be excerpted to create video segments for your own follow up session: (3)
  - *World of Tomorrow* — the story of the 1939 World's Fair
  - *Consuming Images* — one of a four-part documentary series with Bill Moyers titled *The Public Mind*.
- *Gospel, Culture and the Media* with the accompanying leader's guide: *The Mything Link*. (2)
- Issue #51 of *Media&Values* Magazine: *Media and the Environment: Challenging the Consumer Society*. Contains handout and activities for ways to remove advertising from your life.

Further Background for Leaders:

- *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Sociey* by Sut Jhally. (5D)
- *Following Christ in a Consumer Sociey* by John Kavanaugh, SJ (Orbis, 1986).
- *Television and Religion: The Shaping of Faith, Values and Culture*, by Rev. William F. Fore. (4)
- *Communication and Cultural Analysis: A Religious View* by Michael Warren (Bergin & Garvey, 1992).
- *Avalon*, a feature film release available in your local video store. (3)
- *Economic Justice For All*, American Catholic Bishop's Pastoral Letter on the economy.
- See list of Recommended Follow-up Resources in *Media&Values #57 / Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age*, p. 23.

SAMPLE SESSION

5

Peace and Justice

Rights and Responsibilities in the Media Age

The media age we live in poses questions about values like freedom and censorship, especially in relation to blame-the-media issues like sexuality, music lyrics or violence. This session provides an important grounding for understanding the economic and political aspects of the media industry that creates our image culture. It would work well as a workshop at a Peace and Justice event or in an adult parish group like Renew. Try it with high school parents or as part of a retreat day or in-service for teachers.

Objectives:

By the end of the session participants will be able to:
- Examine their own responses to controversial issues in the media.
- Understand the principles of media literacy.
- Apply principles of media literacy to particular issues.

Leader Preparation:

- Read background material on the four principles of media literacy in the front of this booklet and in the introduction to the Leader's Guide for *Living in an Image Culture* Workshop Kit™.
- Read *Media&Values* issue #57 / *Impact Of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age*.

Materials Needed:

- Copies for each participant of Handout #4 from *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit™: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy*.
- A Bible.
- Album and magazine covers on the walls; if available, posters or artistic prints; books.
- Copies of the each of the four scenarios; one per group of five.
- Copies of the persona descriptions–one persona per person, five different ones per group.

Time Required: 1 1/2 hours

Directions

Introduction
(10 minutes)

A. Welcome the participants.

B. Have participants introduce themselves to each other.

C. Begin the session with a short prayer. Suggestion: Isaiah 52:7 ("How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good tidings.") or Amos 5:24 ("let justice roll down like waters. . .")

D. Invite reflection on key words: tidings, publish, etc.

E. State the purpose of the session:

1. To examine how controversial issues are dealt with through the media.
2. To explore concepts of rights and justice in the media age.
3. To apply the principles of media literacy to particular cases.
4. To experience the difficulty of reaching just decisions about sensitive media issues.

Awareness
(10 minutes)

A. Ask members of your group to discuss how a media event that created controversy due to its content affected them:
   1) as a teenager
   2) as an adult
   3) through their children.

Depending on the age range of the group, examples might include the appearance of Elvis Presley or The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the popularity of Archie Bunker and *All in the Family* in the '70s, *The Last Temptation of Christ* or the introduction of MTV in the '80s. Don't let this discussion dominate the time available but use it only to raise awareness that media issues arise periodically to challenge societal mores. Some further questions might include:

1) Did you engage in conversation about the issue or was a decision made for you?
2) For example, did your parents say they didn't want you watching Elvis because of the way he danced?
3) Did the long hair of The Beatles shock you as well as your parents?
4) How has your dealing with sensitive issues changed as you've become an adult? become a parent?

Analysis
(30 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
   - To explore issues that affect censorship and freedom in the media age.
   - To apply the principles of media literacy to particular issues.

B. Pass out Handout #4: T*he Four Principles of Media Literacy*.

C. Break into groups of five. Have the members read the principles and discuss them briefly in their group. Do these principles shed light on the controversies they've experienced in the past? With these principles now as a guideline for understanding the media in our lives, how might they handle controversies in the future?

D. Announce that each group will be given a contemporary media scenario (see box on next page) to roleplay. If you have more than 20 participants it's okay to give the same scenario to more than one group. Have one member of the group read the case to the others.

E. Then explain that the groups must complete their tasks while playing the role of a persona and pass out personas or character descriptions for each of the five roles. When passing out personas, try to give them to people who do not fit the type. For example, the feminist doesn't have to be a woman; give the business persona to someone not from the business world. The groups have 15 minutes to complete their tasks.

Five Possible Personas

Persona A: You are a conservative politician. Your views are extreme. You lean toward homophobia, racism and traditional roles for women. You are rigid.

Persona B: You are a radical feminist. Your views on freedom extend from the personal to the public. You find any form of censorship a restriction of freedom.

Persona C: You are a tolerant and religious minister. Your views are malleable to the group, you try to appease all sides, to keep everyone happy.

Persona D: You are a businessperson. Your primary motivation is the financial benefit to your company or organization. You see all issues as a means to only one end—making money.

Persona E: You are a parent. Your main concern is the healthy development of your child. Family is your priority.

Four Media Scenarios

#1. You are the executive committee of the town art museum. Your curator announces an unexpected opportunity for your museum to schedule a well-known contemporary photography exhibit which has been criticized by some conservative groups as pornographic although others consider the collection, despite some nudity, aesthetically tasteful. The exhibit, if shown, would be open to the paying public. Your museum has recently announced a fundraising campaign to build a new wing that would have a special children's art gallery.
Your task: To come to consensus on whether the museum should carry the exhibit or not.

#2. You are the editorial board of a large publishing company. A book your company released suffered criticism, including some acts of violence against the author, bookstores and your company, due to its "offensive" interpretation by some religious groups. The author is protected by the state and expects you to release the paperback edition. Your company stands to make significant profit from the sale but publishing will also reopen the controversy.
Your task: To come to a consensus on whether you should publish the paperback edition.

#3. You are the marketing executives of a large record company. A record by an African American artist about to be released by your company is creating controversy because of its alleged racist content. Some groups argue the album correctly articulates the frustration of many inner-city African Americans. Your company previously released an album by a white comedian, deemed offensive by some, without any warnings. Groups are suggesting the album should carry a warning and be sold to adults only. The controversy is spurring market interest in the album.
Your task: To come to consensus on whether you should release the album with a warning sticker.

#4. You are the editorial board of a major magazine. At a time when your competitors are failing due to an economic crisis, you have been offered a lucrative deal from a major fashion advertiser. The company wants to purchase four full-color double-page spreads in your publication, at considerable profit to the magazine. The controversy surrounds the content of the ads. Each features real-life tragedies. One centers on the still-burning husk of an automobile destroyed by a car bomb in Dublin, another shows a family gathered around a man who has just died of AIDS. The company running the ads say they are raising awareness. Your magazine may not stay solvent without the potential income from the ads.
Your task: To come to consensus on whether you should run the ads in your next issue.

F. Debrief: Give the groups five minutes to debrief their roles in the scenario. Outline the following questions on blackboard, chart or overhead in order to focus the reports:

1) Did they reach consensus? How did the group communicate?
2) Was the task easy or difficult, and why?
3) Were the four principles influential in reaching your decision?
4) Which principles were most important to each of the "personas?"
5) What did you learn about: Yourself? Other types of people in society? The issue you dealt with?

G. Feedback: Ask each group to briefly summarize the groups' main learnings from the exercise.

Pastoral Reflection
(20 minutes)

Suggested Scripture: *Luke* 6: 36-45 (Judge not...)

Action
(20 minutes)

- As a group, summarize your learnings by developing a five or 10-point checklist for responding to controversial media issues in the light of justice and faith. This might take the form of basic questions to ask or principles to apply. As a followup, make sure every participant gets a copy. You might also publish it in the parish bulletin with a report of the workshop session or send it as a news release to your Catholic newspaper.

- ***Ongoing***: Establish a bulletin board to collect and display articles about contemporary media issues. Encourage clippings from a wide variety of publications in order to collect various points of view.

- ***Ongoing***: Investigate bulk subscription possibilities for the new *Catholic Family Media Guide* published by The Durand Corporation, Box 369, Durand, IL 61024; 815-248-4407. Developed by professional journalists and Catholic lay leaders in the diocese of Rockford, the Guide provides news and feature articles analyzing media issues, suggestions for approaching popular films and television and reviews of recently released videos and books. It's a way to supplement your media literacy education program by helping families make more informed media choices day-by-day.

Explore and Connect:
More Activities and Useful Resources

This session dealt with the issues of censorship and freedom—that is, political questions. The media's portrayal of justice often stops short of full analysis. By examining media treatment of issues like violence, the environment, military intervention and hunger, we can clarify our response as Christians to those questions. The following list offers some additional sessions your group could try.

Codes in parentheses tell you where to locate details about the resource in the Media Literacy Resource Directory.

Teaching Tools:

- In *Living in the Image* Culture Workshop Kit™: (5K)
  - Follow-up Sessions for *Public Life* (p. 48 of Leader's Guide)
  - Learning Module B2: *Media Construct Reality*
- *Us Against Them: How the Media Create Enemies* — Session Two of *Images of Conflict*, a Media Literacy Workshop Kit™. (5I)
- *Citizenship in the Media Age*, a Media Literacy Workshop Kit™ on *Building the Common Good* and its accompanying issue of Media&Values Magazine: *Rethinking Democracy*. Dozens of activities connecting media literacy to coverage of politics and public issues. (5B)
- Project Censored— a group activity to nominate news issues that mainstream TV and newspapers don't (or won't) cover. (5I)
- *Video, Violence and Values*, 3-part workshop for youth and adults on decoding violence and sexual violence in "slasher" films. (5I)

Further Background for Leaders:

- *Target Prime Time: Advocacy Groups and the Struggle Over Entertainment Television*, Kathryn Montgomery. (4)
- *On Television: Public Trust or Private Property?*, documentary video / 60 minutes. (5C)
- *Dictating Content: How Advertising Pressure Can Corrupt A Free Press* — monograph published by the Center for the Study of Commercialism. (5D)
- *Unreliable Sources: A Guide To Detecting Bias In The News Media*, Lee and Solomon. (5A)
- *Questioning the Media: A Critical Introduction* — excellent framework for media criticism. (2)
- *Media&Values* Issue #47/ *Media and Money: How the Bottom Line Affects What we See and Hear.*
- *Media&Values* Issue #50/ *News for the '90s.*
- See Resources for Follow-up in *Media&Values* Issue #58: *Rethinking Democracy.*
- "Whose Values?" cover story, *Newsweek*, June 1992.

SAMPLE SESSION

6

Marriage Preparation / Family Life

TV Families: Myths, Make Believe and Magic

Why would you include a marriage preparation group in your media literacy program? Well, how are media families "constructed?" What are the myths and misconceptions about the family as shown to us through media? How do media portrayals influence our image of what a good marriage is? of family roles? of family life together? What more appropriate teachable moment is there to explore these questions than the forming of a new family?

This outline was created for use with a marriage preparation group, but many other adult groups come to mind immediately: Marriage Encounter groups, family life workshops, adult faith-sharing groups or a combined evening with parents and teens. All of us can benefit from exploring and enriching our images of how families are and can be in contemporary times.

Objectives:

By the end of the sessions participants will be able to:

- Examine stereotypes of men and women in the media.
- Discuss the differences between media families and real families.
- Analyze the ways media families solve problems.

Leader Preparation:

- In *Media&Values* Issue #57 / *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age*, read "The Power of Images," "TV: The Search for Meaning" (pp 4-6) and "Meeting Media in Every Corner of Our Lives." (pp. 14-15)
- Tear each postcard into eight pieces, mix up the pieces of all the postcards and place on four different tables around the room.
- Before the session, videotape three popular TV shows that deal with family life. If possible, put the three sections on different tapes. Pre-select the "turning point" or resolution of issue involved in each show. Cue the tapes to that point.
- Recommended reading: "Dads through the Decades" in *Media&Values* Issues #48: *Men, Myth and Media* and "Where's Mom?" in *Media&Values* #49: *Redesigning Women*
- Recommended reading: *Prime Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* by Ella Taylor

Materials Needed:

- A set of postcards with similar, but not the same, scenes. (You will need one postcard per group of eight.) Be sure to use only one postcard per eight-person group. If your group does not divide evenly by eight, use one postcard for the odd-numbered group and adjust your material so that they will they will only "find" the correct number of pieces.
- Newsprint and markers.
- A Bible.
- A VCR and TV.

Time Required:

2 hours

47

Directions

Introduction
(10 minutes)

A. Welcome the participants.

B. Have participants introduce themselves to other couples.

C. Begin the session with a short prayer.

D. State the purpose of the session:
1) To examine stereotypes of the family in the media.
2) To explore the differences between media families and real families.
3) To analyze the ways media families solve problems.

Awareness
(30 minutes)

A. Show the first clip from your "family portraits" videos. There is no need for discussion at this point. Later in the session you will repeat all the clips.

B. Activity: *Wish You Were Clear, Postcard Pieces*
Tell the group that they have four minutes to complete the next task. Without talking they must choose one piece of postcard and try to match pieces with others until they have a complete picture. When they have a completed postcard they must stick it together and sit with their group. It is important that you "pressure" the group about the 4-minute time limit. At each minute mark you might give them a countdown.

C. Feedback: The following questions may help you get started:

1) What was difficult about the process?
2) Did you find this frustrating? Why?
3) How did you communicate with one another?
4) Was there a feeling of helping other groups or competing with them?
5) Were there any groups that did not complete the task? How did they feel?
6) How did you feel about the time you were given?

D. Then have the group list various "families" currently featured on television. Prompt the group to include all kinds of TV genres: sit-coms, dramas, soap operas, etc. Assign each group to one or two TV "families" and have them discuss the following questions:

1) What kind of problems does the family face in a typical episode?
2) What roles do the various family members portray?
3) How does the TV family deal with "difficult" or sensitive issues (if any)?
4) Are their problem-solving methods realistic?
5) Is there any relationship between program length and problem-solving abilities?
6) Is the TV family a model for the kind of family life you hope to have?

Analysis
(40 minutes)

A. Show the second video clip of the selected TV families. Remember, you will repeat this later, so just ask participants to watch.

B. Split the groups of eight in half so that each becomes two groups of four, group A and group B. Assign the same task to each division. You will assign the same task/issue to the new A/B groups. The A groups will try to solve the task as a real family, the B groups as a TV family.

- Here are suggestions for four sets. If you need more you can repeat some of these or create your own alternates.

C. Pass out the issues and have a member of the group read them to the other seven members of their group.

Group 1 Family issue:
You've found drugs in your daughter's room. You suspected her drug use for some time, but this convinces you. What do you do?

Group 2 Family issue:
Your 17-year-old daughter has just told you she is pregnant and plans to seek an abortion. What do you do?

Group 3 Family issue:
Your father is an alcoholic. When you bring up the problem of his drinking he becomes abusive. What do you do?

Group 4 Family issue:
Your husband has just lost his job and prospects for employment look bad. Without his paycheck your family is a short step away from homelessness. What do you do?

D. Then tell the groups the roles they have to play. Give each member of each set one role.

A set: Real Family	**B set: TV Family**
Person one: Parent	Person one: A live-in housekeeper
Person two: Close adult relative	Person two: A single-parent professional
Person three: Teen-age daughter	Person three: Twin teen girls
Person four: ten-year old son	Person four: Precocious six-year old by from another ethnic culture

E. Tell the groups they have 10 minutes to complete their task. At the end of the time show the third section of your television family portraits.

F. Bring the divided groups back together. Have them share the outcome of the different group approaches to the family issues.

G. Feedback: Here are some suggested questions:

1) How did your group solve the problem?
2) What were the major differences between the television and real family's solutions?
3) Do you feel it is possible for a television program to model realistic approaches to difficult questions?

H. Repeat all three of the video clips and ask for feedback from the participants. Some suggested questions:

1) What strikes you about the ways these families deal with issues?
2) Has your discussion with your group revealed any difficulties with TV families?
3) How does TV suggest all issues can be solved?
4) Do you think the way TV families deal with issues is realistic?
5) Why is it we rarely see TV families watching TV?

Pastoral Reflection
(20 minutes)

Suggested Scripture: *Matthew* 5:44-45. (Love your enemies)

Break the group into original couples and have them write a family creed or belief statement together. It should attempt to describe the couples' beliefs about their future family life together. What should be the role of media in their family life?

Action
(20 minutes)

- Invite each couple to share their family creed with the group. Is there a way to incorporate this creed into their upcoming wedding ceremony?

- ***Or:*** Ask each group that discussed one (or more) TV families to summarize their discussion by writing up a short review/analysis of their show that can be printed in the Sunday bulletin as a service to other families in the parish. Make the reviews an ongoing series for a period of time or perhaps print them all together as a special "supplement" for one Sunday.

- ***Ongoing:*** At the next gathering of the group, begin with a few minutes of sharing about the group's media experiences of the past week. What has changed in the way they viewed TV or watched a movie? What new insights have they gained about the images of family portrayed by the mass media?

- ***Ongoing:*** Invite this group of young couples to assist in the development of a parish video library or parish media resource center featuring videos and resources to support family growth and sharing. (If you have not already done so, consider starting one.) Include popular feature films such as *Driving Miss Daisy*, *E.T.*, *Romero* or *City Slickers* as well as print and video resources that can enrich family life or address family issues and concerns.

  There are many successful models for developing a parish media center. Consult "The Parish Media Resource Center," by Angela Ann Zukowski, MHSH, chapter 5 in *Media, Faith & Families: A Parish Ministry Guide*, or send $5 for a background packet from: Center for Religious Telecommunications, University of Dayton, 300 College Park, Dayton, OH 45409. The Center also publishes a quarterly newsletter with news, tips and resources for parish libraries for $10/year.

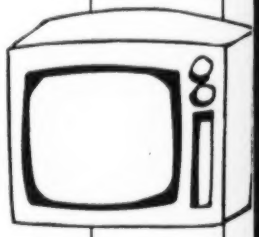
Explore and Connect:
More Activities and Useful Resources

This session dealt with families and the way they are depicted in the media. Other themes that may be appropriate for this group include: Gender roles and advertising, the role TV should plays in future children's lives ("Parenting in the TV age"), male/female roles in relation to technology (who will control the remote control?!). A healthy family is one that has the tools to deal with the complexities of the modern age. Media literacy provides the tools to build healthy families in a mediated culture.

Teaching Tools:

Codes in parentheses tell you where to locate details about the resource in the Media Literacy Resource Directory.

- Sample Session Three: *'Who do you say I am?' Fashion, Ads and Beauty.*
- In *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit™: (5K)
  - Learning Module B10: *Gender Roles in Print Ads.*
- In *Break The Lies That Bind* Workshop Kit™: (5F)
  - Session Two: *Advertising and Women: How to See Through the Soft Sell*
  - Session Three: *Advertising and Men: Stale Roles and Tight Buns*
  - Session Six: *Worlds Apart: Women, Men and Technology*
- *Media, Faith and Families: A Parish Ministry Guide* — dozens of activities for family involvement in media literacy. (5E)
- *Avalon*, a 1991 feature film now available in video, provides dozens of discussion-sparking segments on the role of television in families from the 1940s to the present. (3)
- In *Parenting in a TV Age* , a Media Literacy Workshop Kit™: (5E)
  - Session One: *Five Important Ideas to Teach your Kids about TV*
- *Buy Me That!* and *Buy Me That, Too!*, an excellent intergenerational video series on advertising and kids. (5E)



Further Background for Leaders:

- *Prime Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America* by Ella Taylor. (5E)
- *World Families Watch Television* by James Lull. (5E)
- *Parents Talking Television: Television in the Home* by Philip Simpson. (5E)
- "Home, Home on the Remote" in *Media&Values* Issues #48: *Men, Myth and Media* and "World's Apart: Women, Men and Technology" in Issue #49: *Redesigning Women.*
- *Media&Values* Issue #52-53: *Children and Television: Growing Up in a Media World.*
- See Resources on Children/Families in Section (5E) of the Media Literacy Resource Directory.

SAMPLE SESSION

7

Teachers and Leaders

The Gospel Challenge of Media Literacy

This session is designed for a parish team and/or school faculty meeting to introduce the concepts and processes of media literacy and to experience the various components of the Catholic Connections to Media Literacy learning package. Sample activities and hands-on group experiences are integrated to focus on the role of the educator in the formation of Christian values in today's media world. The session may also be held with other pastoral leaders: the parish council, officers and committee chairs of the home/school association, volunteer catechists, etc.

Objectives:

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Identify at least two principles of media literacy
- Recognize the process of the Pastoral Circle
- Understand the distinction and connection between mass media and our image culture
- Relate concepts of faith development to media literacy education
- Feel user friendly with the concepts in *Catholic Connections to Media Literacy*

Leader Preparation:

- Read major articles in *Media&Values* #57: *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age*, especially "Storytellers Shape Spiritual Values."
- Read Sections 1, 2 and 4 of *Forming Values in a Media Age* and "What You Need to Know To Lead This Workshop" from *Living in the Image Culture*.
- Preview the video, *Challenging the Image Culture*.
- Optional but recommended: Begin to keep your own "Media Log" or journal as suggested in Learning Module A2 in *Living in the Image Culture*. This core activity of media literacy will help you become aware of the amount and impact of media in your own life.
- Arrange room for opening presentation but quickly transformable for informal interaction.
- Read and reflect: *John* 5:1-8.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the following handouts or articles for all participants:
  "The Work of Our Hands: Idolatry in the Consumer Culture" (pp. 36 & 37) of this booklet and Handout # 4 from *Living in the Image Culture* Workshop Kit: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy* and #1: *Frame It!* (It's helpful to pre-cut the hole in the middle)
- A collection of old magazines—include a variety of news, women's, sports, etc.
- Overhead Projector
- Make overhead transparencies from Overhead Master #1: *The Pastoral Circle* and #2 *The Four Principles of Media Literacy* (pp 58 & 59 of this booklet)
- VCR and monitor (with remote control if possible) with Video: *Challenging the Image Culture*
- Newsprint and markers or chalkboard
- Bible.

Time Required:

2 hours

Directions

Introduction
(10-15 minutes)

A. Welcome participants and open with a reading of *John* 5:1-8 (Cure of the paralytic).

B. Reflective questions:
   1) What is my paralysis or disability when I try to think positively about television or media?
   2) Where do I place responsibility for the quality of the media I experience? Can I change this?

C. Share your thoughts with another person.

D. State the objectives of the session:
   1) To become aware of the media culture and its impact on living our faith today.
   2) Overview *Catholic Connections to Media Literacy* components and process.
   3) Enjoy feeling empowered and equipped to launch media education in your setting.

Awareness
(30 minutes)

A. State the purpose of this activity:
   • To get an overview of the media challenge facing ministry professionals.

B. Show approximately the first seven minutes of *Challenging the Image Culture*. (Stop just *before* the TV graphic and the words: "Back to Basics." The narrator has just asked: "But how do you approach the challenge of media literacy education?"

C. Break into groups. Direct them to discuss these questions previously written large on newsprint:
   1) Are the information and/or scenarios in the video true to your experience?
   2) Has the impact of media changed my teaching style or affected my interaction with groups/classes in the past 5-10 years? How?
   3) What have I done to adjust?
   4) Has it affected my self-esteem or confidence as a teacher?
   5) How do I cope?

D. Feedback from large group. Record main points on newsprint.

Analysis
(25 minutes)

A. State the purpose of the activity:
   • To learn the principles of media literacy and to experiment with identifying them.

B. Distribute Handout # 4: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy* and

Show overhead #2: *The Four Principles of Media Literacy*. Go over each one briefly, adding comments from your own preparation and reading.

C. While the group is reading the handout in detail, pass out magazines. (Try to give women's magazines to men; men's publications to women; mix up general publications among the groups.) Direct them to find examples of one or more of the principles in the ads or editorial matter of the various magazines, using the handout for further explanation if needed. Discuss and compare in small group.

D. Distribute Handout #1: *Frame It!* Direct group to get up, walk around, use the "frame" to focus on a subject in a variety of ways, e.g. distance, single, group, etc. Call the group back; ask probing questions about the experience:
   • How did changing the distance effect the information you perceived?
   • Did you feel any different emotions when you were "up close?" Name those feelings.
   • Which was "better," more comfortable, etc.?

E. Continue with the video, *Challenging the Image Culture*. Begin with the "Back to Basics" section to review the Four Principles. (7 minutes. End with Elizabeth Flynn in class using overheads, commenting on tobacco advertisements.

F. Explain that the goal of media literacy education is to empower us not only to think critically about the media's messages and techniques but to motivate us to take action that will lead to personal as well as systemic change.

G. Show overhead #1: *The Pastoral Circle*. Discuss the four steps and trace briefly how the session has followed the process. From your preparatory reading, share how the model converges with similar models in the literature of education and social justice.

H. View remainder of video, *Challenging the Image Culture*, to the end.

Break!
(10 minutes)

Pastoral Reflection
(15 minutes)

Distribute the handout you made from page 36 & 37: "The Work of Our Hands: Idolatry in the Consumer Culture" Direct them to read and reflect privately on the implications. After a few minutes, return to small groups and respond to questions written large on newsprint: Referring to the quotes by Thomas Merton, Neil Postman or *Aetatis Novae*:

1) Do you agree with all? some? none?
2) How does the concept of "cargo cults" fit your experience?
3) How does today's consumer culture challenge your ministry?

Action
(15 minutes)

- Divide group into smaller working groups of five or six by similarity of ministry, by grade or academic department or other logical division depending on the group. Give each small group the challenge to name and describe three possible ways to incorporate media literacy education in their portfolio in the coming weeks and months. Let groups report back to one another, creating a checklist of possibilities for the whole school or parish.

- ***Ongoing***: Invite subgroups to form for ongoing implementation tasks. If need be, report back at the group's next meeting:
  1) explore the complete *Catholic Connections to Media Literacy* package and recomend ways it can best be put to immediate use.
  2) examine the *Media Literacy Resource Directory* for recommended resources that may be available or that would need to be ordered.
  3) prepare a similar presentation to this one to other groups, e.g. home/school association leaders, volunteer religious ed teachers, etc.
  4) Start a bulletin board or establish a common area to display and share articles about the impact of media in our society, resources for media literacy education and success stories from one another as the program develops.

- ***Ongoing:*** If your school or parish is not already working on the development of a comprehensive communications plan as recommended in the Vatican document, *Aetatis Novae*, order a copy of the document from the USCC Office of Publications — Toll free: 1-800-235-USCC (8722) Order #504-6; $4.95 plus $2.25 postage/handling. Note how media literacy education is a key component (paragraph 27) of pastoral communications planning at all levels of the Church.

- *Ongoing:* Discuss with the group the concept of a Media Log or journal as explained in Module A2 of *Living in the Image Culture*. If you've started to keep one yourself, share what you've learned yourself in the first few days. Encourage each participant to start keeping their own Media Log as they work to incorporate media literacy concepts into their ministry.

Closing Prayer
(10 minutes)

Suggested Scripture: *John* 5:1-15 (Healing of the Paralytic)

After a prayerful reading and a pause, invite reflective prayers around. (You may want to write the following key words on newsprint).

- Recognizing and naming my / our paralysis, passiveness.
- Asking Jesus to *empower* us with openness and readiness to "pick up our mats and walk."
- Hearing anew the Gospel mandate to teach—about the media!
- Others, as may be expressed by participants.

The Trivialization of News or Why We Need Media Literacy

When we speak of the "trivialization" of news, I believe we are talking about all those forces, trends and practices that either limit the quantity of news available to the public, set aside "important" or "serious" news for that which tickles or titillates, or treats people, groups, movements and events in an offhand fashion, thereby minimizing them or depriving the public of the information needed to make decisions or understand current events.

Some of the newspaper clippings my parishioners bring me to read suggest that they do not clearly differentiate between our local daily, the newsletter of a fringe advocacy group and a supermarket tabloid. This prompts me to ask further questions about teaching critical awareness as a component of the Gospel mandate to promote justice and seek peace:

- Are people able to read with discernment, taking into consideration whether an article is an op-ed piece or a news story, whether it is by a journalist or someone with a vested interest in the topic?
- Can a viewer fill in the gaps of a 28-second TV news item?
- Can a viewer differentiate between *Top Cops, A Current Affair* and *NBC Nightly News?* between John McLaughlin, Ted Koppel, Rush Limbaugh and Diane Sawyer?
- Are readers or viewers so numbed by personal problems that they will tolerate a 22-minute newscast with 12 minutes devoted to sports or gossip?
- Is the general public so un-curious about the nation and the world that they are satisfied with a news program focusing around: "Gorbachev Resigned, the Soviet Union is No More," "*Beauty and the Beast* Leading Movie Money-Maker," "Bush Goes Fishing," and "Giants Lose Again?"

—Rev. Charles Austin, Teaneck, NJ

Appendix A

Create Your Own — Session Outline

Title:

Target Group:

Objectives:
By the end of the session participants will be able to:

-
-
-

Leader Preparation:
(Include appropriate reflections on related scripture, church teaching, etc. for target audience integration/application.)

Materials Needed:

Time Required:

Introduction

Awareness

Analysis

Pastoral Reflection

Action

Appendix B

Further Session Suggestions

After you've tried some of the sample sessions look over the following for further topics you'd like to address. Use the Learning Module Outline to develop your own session.

Pick a theme and read over the four principles of media literacy. Focus your lesson on one of the principles and follow the steps of the Pastoral Circle to develop your lesson plan. If you get stuck, look over the sessions in this book and other resource materials and "borrow" ideas from them–it's O.K., that's what we hope you'll do.

Ecology: Does the media encourage waste? (You might try cutting all the "news" from the newspaper and see what's left.) Does the elaborate "packaging" of products perpetuate the worst of the "image culture?" Steps to encourage recycling would be one possible action.

Culture: Media's myths about the world are global. Try cutting cover pages from several weekly or monthly issues of major magazines. Make a giant collage of the covers and explore questions about what kind of world a future anthropologist might think we lived in.

Family: How are single-parent families treated in the media? What do advertisers say about the family? How does that compare to what soap operas say? How are issues like divorce addressed?

Violence: What stereotypes about minorities and violence are perpetuated by the media? How does violence affect children's ability to compromise and negotiate? What does our faith teach us about violence? How does faith and culture clash when it comes to violence?

Consumerism: Explore the differences between Christ's messages about the kingdom of God in the Scriptures and the image culture's messages about the kingdom of gold offered in advertising.

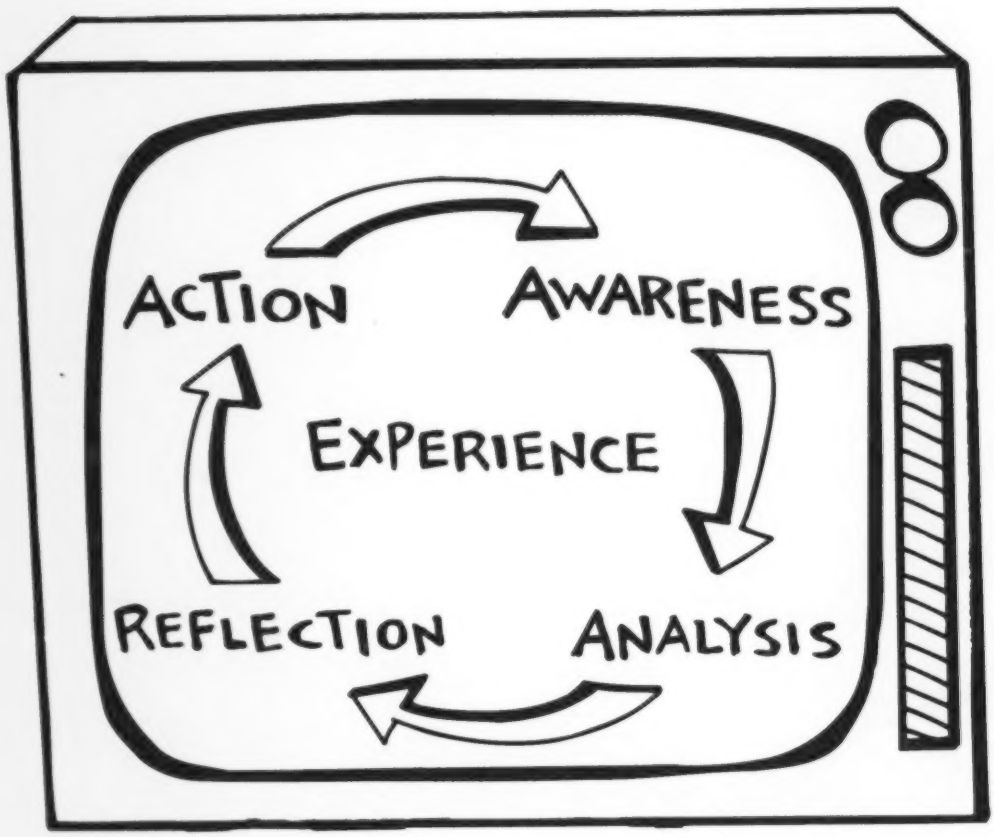
Crime: Who commits crimes on television? How are criminals depicted? What does Christ's dictate: "I was sick and imprisoned and you visited me" mean in the media age? You might also examine the truth-in-television crime reenactments focusing on the principle that media construct reality.

Faith: How are religious questions dealt with in the media? Are questions about meaning and religious questions relegated to early Sunday morning television or the back pages of the newspaper? Why?

Ideologies: Who owns the media? A look at the companies that own anything from radio stations to movie studios might prove revealing about what gets covered by those outlets.

Overhead
Master #1

The Pastoral Circle



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Overhead
Master #2

The Four Principles of Media Literacy

1. **Media Construct Reality.**
2. **Media Use Identifiable Techniques.**
3. **Media are Businesses with Commercial Interests.**
4. **Media Present Ideologies and Value Messages.**

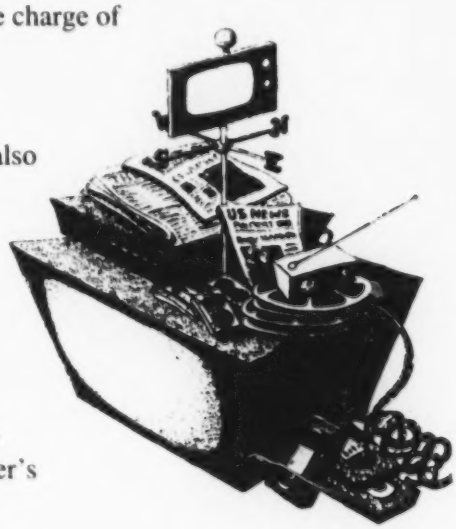
CENTER FOR MEDIA AND VALUES

Established in 1989, the Center for Media and Values evolved from 20 years of work by Sr. Elizabeth Thoman, CHM, in the field of media criticism and education.

In 1977 she founded the magazine *Media&Values* and has pioneered a U.S. approach to media literacy, gaining recognition around the world. By linking media concerns to social justice praxis, the field of media literacy has grown and expanded to address deeper issues of media as a value shaper and cultural agent of our stories.

Today, the Center for Media and Values serves as a "think tank" and national resource center to create new ways:

- *to teach* about the media—TV, video, print and advertising;
- to recognize the connections between the messages of the media and how we live our lives;
- to help individuals and families take charge of their media environment.



While continuing with the award-winning *Media&Values* magazine, the Center now also publishes a growing library of Media Literacy Workshop Kits™ as a new generation of resources for media literacy education in schools, churches and community organizations.

Membership in the Center ensures participation in the growing media literacy movement as well as ongoing access to the Center's publications and resources.

For a free catalog and membership information for yourself, your school or parish contact the Center for Media and Values at 1962 S. Shenandoah Street, Los Angeles, CA 90034; (310)559-2944.

CATHOLIC CONNECTIONS TO MEDIA LITERACY

A multi-media learning program linking Catholic values and today's media culture.

Components:

1. *Impact of Images: Life and Culture in the Media Age.* Three copies of this backround issue of *Media&Values* magazine are included for reference and for leader preparation.
2. *Living in the Image Culture* contains a ready-to-use leader's guide and handout masters for 15 basic learning modules, activities and tools for media literacy education — adaptable for both youth and adult groups. Consider it a "primer" in the field.
3. *Forming Values in the Media Age* is an invaluable sourcebook for developing media literacy classes and programs specifically in Catholic schools and parishes.
4. *Challenging the Image Culture,* a 20-minute video, will introduce you to the principles of media literacy and demonstrate how to apply them in your school or parish.
5. *Media Literacy Resource Directory* contains ordering information for dozens of resources to support and expand your media education effort.

Additional copies of all print components are available. Contact the Center for Media and Values, 1962 S. Shenandoah, Los Angeles, CA 90034; (310)559-2944.